



THE
VISIONS
OF
JOHN BUNYAN,
BEING

HIS LAST REMAINS:

GIVING AN ACCOUNT OF

THE GLORIES OF HEAVEN,

THE

TERRORS OF HELL,

AND OF

THE WORLD TO COME.

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PREFACE.

CHRISTIAN READER:

THE design of the following Treatise is thy spiritual advantage, that by displaying the heavenly glory to the eyes of thy mind, thou mayest have thy affections and desires stirred up to choose it as thy chiefest treasure, and then where thy treasure is, thy heart will soon be also: and perhaps here is as much said to engage thy affections as has been any where written upon this subject, and which, through the Divine blessing, may beget in thee those breathings after the happiness here described, which may issue in thy eternal fruition of it. It does not indeed pretend to give a graphical description thereof, (*for it does not yet appear what we shall be,*) but it gives such a description of it as the Divine oracles will warrant; showing wherein the nature of our happiness does chiefly consist, and resolving the most abstruse and curious questions about it, according to the word of truth. And seeing love and desire are the wings of the

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by which it flies towards Heaven, not but the devout soul will here use attractives that will insensibly draw it thither: for what can more engage our affections than the desire of beholding that bright eternal excellency, who is altogether desires, and whom the church describes as fairer than the children of men! And if he was so in the days of his humiliation, how much more glorious is he on the throne, being crowned with glory and honour, as the apostle to the Hebrews speaks?

But although glorious things be spoken of the city of God, which is represented to us as an eternal excellency, and the joy of many generations; yet, after the largest descriptions, we shall be forced to acknowledge, when we come to Heaven, what the Queen of Sheba did, when she saw the glory of Solomon, that the half has not been told us.

However, there is enough to engage our hearts and ravish our affections, and to make us cry out with David, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" But as love and desire carries us after that which we apprehend to be amiable and lovely, so fear is a passion of the soul whereby it flies from and

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evil; and this passion works as
in some souls, as love and desire
others. And to these the Visions
may be as useful to affright them
it, as the Visions of Heaven to draw
others to it. Here you may, as it were,
lay your ears to the mouth of Tophet,
and hear the doleful lamentations of
those lost wretches, that through a vain
pursuit of sinful pleasure, have brought
upon themselves eternal miseries. Here
you may see how they too soon lament
those torments it is too late to help; and
these should, to all wise considering
persons, be looked on as so many sea-
marks, to warn others to avoid the like
destruction.

The author to the Hebrews tells us,
that Noah, being moved with fear, pre-
pared an ark to the saving of his house;
and if the fear of the torments of Hell,
(which are here so lively described,)
move any souls to get into the ark Christ
Jesus, and so avoid the wrath to come,
it will be an unspeakable mercy.

Nor let any one be stumbled, that this
is delivered under the similitude of a
Vision; for so long as the truths herein
conveyed are according to the true ana-

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faith, the dress in which they are
may be very well dispensed with.
alone herein like the physicians,
but their physick in some pleasant
manner, to make it go down the easier
with their patients; and since the way
to Heaven has been so taking, under the
similitude of a dream, why should not
the journey's end be as acceptable un-
der the similitude of a Vision? Nay,
why should it not be more acceptable,
since the end is preferable to the means,
and Heaven to the way that brings us
thither? The pilgrim met with many
difficulties, but here they are all over;
all storms and tempests here are hushed
in silence and serenity.

Let us stay no longer here, then, but
mount thither upon the golden wings of
faith and love: "For lo! the winter is
past; the rain is over and gone; the
flowers appear on the earth; the time
of the singing of birds is come, and the
voice of the turtle is heard in our land:"
yea, the blessed Bridegroom of our souls
calls to us, "Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away:" which reader, that thou
mayest make haste to do, is the desire
and prayer of thy soul's well-wisher,
JOHN BUNYAN.

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THE WORLD TO COME

OR

VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN wicked and profligate persons have gone on in a course of sin to that degree that they can scarce hope for pardon, and find they have reason to fear the just judgment of God for their sins, they begin at first to wish that there was no God to punish them, which they think their interest, and so by degrees come to persuade themselves that there is none; and then they set themselves to study for arguments to back their opinion, and prove what they are willing to believe. It was with one of this sort of brutes, (for they are scarce worthy of the name of men,) that I had the unhappiness to be acquainted, who would be continually inculcating me, that there was neither God nor Devil, Heaven nor Hell; and that those things were only the politick inventions of such as were willing to keep the world in awe, "just (says he) as we talk of bug-bears to frighten children." It was not without horror and trembling that I first heard this discourse, and therefore I usually left him when he began upon those topicks; but his speaking of them to me so often, at last prevailed with me to consider what grounds he had for what he said; and from this time I felt my mind perplexed with so much trouble and darkness that I could hardly bear up under it, for I knew not how to make out, to my own satisfaction, those truths which before appeared to me self-evident. I could not think there was no God, but with the greatest

yet I called in question the truth of his be-
 could not have parted with my hopes of Hea-
 have been made heir of all the world; and
 questioned whether there was any such place
 or state; and I began to doubt whether there was
 any Hell, and yet at the same time thought I found
 the flames of it flashing in my face. Thus was my
 mind distracted with apparent contradictions, and I
 found I was involved in a labyrinth of confusion, out
 of which I had no clue to extricate myself. In this
 perplexed condition I went to my false friend, to see
 what comfort he could administer to me; (which was
 like Saul's going to the witch of Endor, when God
 had forsaken him,) but what he said did more con-
 found than satisfy me. He indeed laughed at my
 fears, pretended to pity my weakness, and seemed
 to hug himself in the freedom and liberty which he
 enjoyed. He told me he was never molested in the
 prosecution of what he had to do, by the frightful
 mormo's of a future state, or an after reckoning; that
 nature was the great mistress of the universe, and
 that therefore he followed her dictates; and that all
 the care he took was so to live here, that when his
 dust should be next impregnated, it might be into
 some delightful species of being: which would like-
 wise, in a great measure, be owing to the place of his
 burial; for if he were buried in a church, or laid up
 in a vault, it was possible his dust might be turned
 into spiders, toads or serpents, and therefore he de-
 signed to be buried in a field or garden, if he could,
 that there his ashes might spring up in curious and
 delightful flowers, which was the utmost happiness
 he could propose to himself; and should be very
 well satisfied to find all those spirits and powers he
 was now possessed of, exerted in variegated beauties
 of nature. And further he affirmed, that for aught
 he knew, in the various metempsychosis of nature,

VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND

he might, some ages hence, again imp
man body, as he believed he had done man.

I then urged the Scriptures against all
telligible system; but he exploded that, a
only the engine by which politick men brough
their designs; and that to prove a deity by the S
tures, was the same thing as to prove the Div
original of the Scriptures by the being of a deity
which was *idem per idem*.

These discourses of his putting me still on further
doubts, I became so uneasy that my life was a bur-
then to me: I dreaded to be left to the belief of those
cursed notions, and yet they continually ran in my
mind: I wished a thousand times I had never heard
them, and yet they were ever before me. What!
said I to myself, is all my hopes of Heaven nothing
but a vain chimera? Have I served God for no-
thing? or rather, have I fancied one, when there is
no such being? It is impossible to tell the agonies
I felt upon my giving way to such thoughts as these,
which still with greater force assaulted me, until at
last I was hurried to the utmost pitch of desperation.
Why should I linger thus, thought I, between des-
pair and hope? Is it not better, said I to myself, to
put a period to this wretched life, and to try the truth
of things?

Upon this, I took a resolution to destroy myself,
and in order thereunto, went out one morning to an
adjacent wood, where I intended to act this bloody
tragedy—which, as I was about to perpetrate, me-
thought I heard a secret whisper, saying: "O Epe-
netus! plunge not thyself into everlasting misery,
to gratify thy soul's worst enemy: that fatal stroke
thou art about to give, seals up thy own damnation;
for if there be a God, as sure there is, how can you
hope for mercy from him, when you thus wilfully de-
stroy his image?" From whence this secret whis-

THE WORLD TO COME: OR

I knew not, but do believe it was from
I am sure it came with so much power, it
fling away the instrument with which I had
ed to offer violence to my own life, and show-
ed me in a moment, the wickedness thereof. The
horror of this barbarous intention set all my joints
a trembling, that I could hardly stand; and then the
fatal precipice of my designed destruction was re-
presented to me in that frightful view, that I could
not but acknowledge my deliverance to be the work
of some invisible and spiritual power, that came so
seasonably to my rescue, and gratitude obliged me
to return him thanks; so I kneeled down upon the
ground, and said—

“O thou invisible eternal power! which, though
unseen by man, beholdest all his actions, and who
had now withheld me from the defacing of thine im-
age, I give thee humble thanks: yes, O thou sove-
reign Being of all beings, I give thee thanks that I
am still alive, and able to acknowledge there is such
a Being. O do not hide thyself from my beholding,
in such thick clouds of darkness, but let the sun of
glory shine upon me, and chase away the blackness
of my benighted soul, that I may never more ques-
tion thy being or omnipotence, which I have had
this moment so great an experience of.”

Then rising from my knees, I went and sat me
down upon a bank, my mind being greatly taken up
with the adorning thoughts of that eternal goodness
that had so eminently saved me from the dreadful
gulph of everlasting ruin, when I was just going to
plunge myself into it. And now methought I could
not but admire that I should be so sottish to call in
question the being of a deity, which every creature
was a witness of, and which a man's own conscience,
more than a thousand witnesses, could not but dic-
tate to him.

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Now, whilst my thoughts were taken
meditations, as I sat upon the bank, I
ly surrounded with a glorious light, the
brightness whereof, was such as I had nev-
any thing like it before. This both surpris-
amazed me, and whilst I was wondering from wh-
it came, I saw coming towards me a glorious appe-
ance, representing the person of a man, but circ-
round about with lucid beams of inexpressible light
and glory, which streamed from him all the way he
came: his countenance was very awful, and yet mix-
ed with such an air of sweetness as rendered it ex-
tremely pleasing, and gave me some secret hopes
he came not to me as an enemy; and yet I knew
not how to bear his bright appearance; and endea-
vouring to stand upon my feet, I soon found I had
no more strength in me, and so fell flat down upon
my face; but by the kind assistance of his arm, I
was soon set upon my feet again, and new strength
was put into me; which I soon perceiving, address-
ed myself to the bright form before me, saying:—
“O my shining deliverer, who hast invigorated my
feeble body, and restored me to new life: how shall
I acknowledge my thankfulness, and in what man-
ner shall I adore thee?”

To which he replied, both with an air of majesty
and mildness:—“Pay thy adorations to the Author
of thy being, and not to me, who am thy fellow crea-
ture; and am sent by Him, whose very being thou
hast so lately denied, to stop thee from falling into
that eternal ruin, whereinto thou wert going to pre-
cipitate thyself.”

This touched my heart with such a deep sense
of my own unworthiness, that my soul even melt-
ed within me, and I could not forbear crying out—
“O how utterly unworthy am I of all this grace
and mercy?”

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the heavenly messenger replied: "The Majesty does not consult, in showing mercy, richness, but his own unbounded goodness and comprehensible love. He saw with how much malice the grand enemy of souls desired thy ruin, and let him go with hopes of overcoming thee, but still upheld thee by his secret power; through which, when Satan thought himself most sure, the snare is broken, and thou art escaped."

These words made me break forth in this ecstatic rapture:—

O, who the depths of this great love can tell,
To save a tempted, sinking soul from hell?
O, glory! glory to my Saviour's name,
I'll now through all eternity proclaim!
Who, when I on the brink of ruin lay,
Saved me from him who would my soul betray:
And now I know, though I no God would own,
The Lord is God; yea, he is God alone!

Angel. Well, said this heavenly visiter, with a pleasing countenance, that you may never doubt any more of the reality of eternal things, the end of my coming to you, is to convince you of the truth of them; not by faith only, but by sight also: for I will show you such things as were never yet beheld by mortal eye; and to that end, your eyes shall be strengthened, and made fitting to behold immaterial objects.

At these surprising words of the angel, I was much astonished, and doubted how I should be able to bear it; and said to him—"O, my Lord, who is sufficient to bear such a sight?"

To which he replied—The joy of the Lord shall be your strength. And when he had said thus, he took hold of me and said—Fear not, for I am sent to show thee things thou hast not seen. And before I was aware, I found myself far above the earth,

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point, in comparison with that region o
which I was translated.

Then I said to my bright conductor—O
offend my Lord, if I ask a question or two of

To which he answered—Speak on: it is my
to inform thee of such things as thou shalt enq
of me; for I am a ministering spirit, sent forth
minister to thee, and to those that shall be heirs of
salvation.

I then said, I would fain be informed what that dark
spot, so far below me, is; which grew less and less,
as I mounted higher and higher, and appears much
darker since I came into this region of light.

That little spot, answered my conductor, which
now looks so dark and contemptible, is that world
of which you was so lately an inhabitant: here you
may see how little all that world appears, for a small
part of which so many do unweariedly labour, and
lay out all their strength and time to purchase it.—
This is that spot of earth which is cantoned and
subdivided into so many kingdoms, to purchase one
of which so many horrid and nefarious villanies, so
many bloody and unnatural murders, have been
committed. Yea, this is that spot of earth, to obtain
one small part whereof so many men have run the
hazard of losing, nay, have actually lost, their pre-
cious souls; so precious that the Prince of Peace has
told us, that though one man could gain the whole,
it could not countervail so great a loss. And the
great reason of their folly is, because they do not
look to things above: for, as you will observe, as
you ascend nearer to this region, the world appears
still less, and more contemptible; and so it will do
to all who can, by faith, once get their hearts above it.
For, could the sons of men below but see the world
just as it is, they would not covet it as they now do;

mas! are in a state of darkness, and, what they love to walk therein. For though the light of Light came down amongst them, and they showed them the true light of life, (which, by his ministers, he still continues,) yet they go on in darkness, and will not bring themselves into the light, because their deeds are evil.

Epenetus. I asked him farther—What were those multitudes of black and horrid forms that hover in the air above the world? which I indeed should have been much afraid of, but that I saw, as you passed by, they fled; perhaps as not being able to abide that brightness with which you are arrayed.

Ang. To this he answered me—They were the fallen and apostate spirits, which, for their pride and their rebellion, were cast down from Heaven, and wander in the air by the decree of the Almighty; being bound in chains of darkness, and kept unto the judgment of the great day. And from thence they are permitted to descend into the world, both for the trial of the elect, and for the condemnation of the wicked. And though you now see they have black and horrid forms, yet were they once the sons of light, and were arrayed in robes of glorious brightness, like what you see me wear—the loss of which, though it was the effect of their own wilful sin, fills them with rage and malice against the ever-blessed God, whose power and majesty they fear and hate; but having lost their innocence and glory, they fly those spirits that have kept their station, and still continue their obedience to their great Creator; in which they are confirmed by the blessed Son of God.

Epen. But tell me, said I, O my happy conductor, have they no hopes of being reconciled to God again, after a term of time, or at least some of them.

Ang. No, not at all, said he; they are lost for ever; they were the first that sinned, and had no

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tempter; and they were all at once cast down from Heaven. Besides, the Son of God, the blessed Messiah, by whom alone salvation can be had, took not upon him the angelick nature, but left the apostate angels all to perish, and only took upon himself the seed of Abraham. And for this reason they have so much malice against the sons of men, whom it is a torment to them to see made heirs of Heaven, whilst they are doomed to hell.

By this time we were got above the sun, whose vast and glorious body, above an hundred times far greater than the earth, moved round the great expanse wherein it was placed, with such a mighty swiftness, that to relate it would appear incredible. But my conductor told me, this mighty, immense, hanging globe of fire, was one of the great works of God, and of so swift a motion, it moved above an hundred thousand miles in the small space of time we call an hour. And yet it always keeps its constant course, and never has the least irregularity in its diurnal or its annual motion; and so exceedingly glorious in its body, that had not my visible faculty been greatly strengthened, I could not have beheld it: nor were those mighty globes of fire we call the fixed stars, less wonderful, whose vast and extreme height, ten thousand leagues at least above the sun, makes them appear like candles in our sight, though every one of them exceeds in magnitude the body of the earth. And should but one of those vast bodies fall, it would burn the world to cinders in a moment; and yet they hang within their spheres without any support, in a pure sea of ether, so thin, and of so great tenuity, that nothing but his word that first created them, could keep them in their station.

Epen. These words are enough, said I to my conductor, to convince any one of the great power of their much more adorable Creator, and of the

blackness of that infidelity which can call in question the being of a Deity, who has given the whole world so many bright evidences of his power and glory, that were not men like beasts, still looking downwards, they could not but acknowledge his great power and wisdom.

Ang. You speak what is true, replied he, but you shall see far greater things than these: these all are but scaffolds and outworks to that glorious building wherein the blessed above inhabit, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; a view of which, as far as you are capable to comprehend it, shall now be given you.

VISIONS OF HEAVEN,

AND THE GLORY THEREOF.

WHAT I had been told by my conductor, I found good in a few moments; for I was presently translated into the glorious mansions of the blessed, and saw such things as it is impossible to represent, and heard that ravishing melodious harmony that I can never utter. Well, therefore, might the beloved apostle John tell us, in his epistle—"Now are we the sons of God!" and it does not yet appear what we shall be. Whoever has not seen that glory, can speak but very imperfectly of it; and they that have, cannot tell the thousandth part of what it is. And, therefore, the great apostle of the Gentiles, who tells us he had been caught up into Paradise, where he had heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for man to utter, gives us no other account of it, but that "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the

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things that God has laid up for those that love him.”

But I will give you the best account I can, of what I saw and heard of the discourses I had with some of the blessed, as near as I can remember.

When I was first brought near this glorious palace, I saw innumerable hosts of bright attendants, who welcomed me into that blissful seat of happiness, having in all their countenances an air of perfect joy, and of the highest satisfaction. And there I saw that perfect and unapproachable light that assimilates all things into its own nature, for even the souls of the glorified saints are transparent and diaphanous.—Neither are they enlightened by the sun, or any created luminaries; but all that light, that flows with so much transparent brightness throughout those heavenly mansions, is nothing else but emanations of the Divine glory, in comparison of which the light of the sun is but darkness. And all the lustre of the most sparkling diamonds, the fire of carbuncles, sapphires and rubies, and the orient brightness of the richest pearls, are but like dead coals in comparison to its glory; and, therefore, it is called “the throne of the glory of God,” wherein the radiant lustre of the Divine majesty is revealed in the most illustrious manner.

The ineffable Deity, exalted on the high throne of his glory, receiving the adoration of myriads of angels and saints, singing forth eternal hallelujahs and praises to him, was too bright an object for mortality to view. Well may he, therefore, be called “the God of glory,” for by his glorious presence he makes heaven what it is. There being rivers of pleasures perpetually springing from the Divine presence, and conciliating cheerfulness, joy and splendour, to all the blessed inhabitants of heaven, the place of his happy residence, and seat of his eternal empire; wherein the Divine Majesty diffuses the richest

beams of his goodness and glory, and in which his chosen saints and servants see and praise his for ever adorable excellencies.

For my own part, my visive faculty was so far too weak to bear the least translucid ray shot from that everlasting spring of light and glory which sat upon the throne, that I was forced to cry to my conductor, "The sight of so much glory is too great for frail mortality to bear; yet it is so refreshing and delightful that I fain would behold it, though I die."

Ang. No, no, said my conductor: death enters not within this blessed place. Here life and immortality reside: nor sin nor sorrow here have ought to do; for 'tis the glory of this happy place to be ever freed from all that is evil, and without that exemption our blessedness, even here, would be imperfect. But come along with me, and I will bring thee to one that's in the body, as thou art; with him converse awhile, till I despatch another ministration, and then I'll conduct thee back again.

Epen. O rather, said I, with some eagerness, let me stay here; for here is no need of building tabernacles: the heavenly mansions are here ready fitted.

To which my shining messenger replied—Here, in a little while, thou shalt be fixed for ever; but the Divine will first must be obeyed.

Swift as thought, he presently conveyed me through thousands of those bright and winged spirits, and then presented me to that illustrious saint, the great Elijah, who tabernacled in the world below so many hundred ages past; and yet methought I knew him at first sight as well as if we had been contemporaries.

Ang. Here is one, said my conductor to Elijah, who, by the commission from the Imperial throne, has been permitted to survey these realms of light; and I have brought him hither to learn from thee wherein its glory and its happiness consists.

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Elijah. That, says the prophet, I shall gladly do; for 'tis our meat and drink, in these blessed regions, to do the will of God and the Lamb—to sing his praises, and serve him with the humblest adoration, saying:—"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever: for he has redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made us unto our God, kings and priests: even so, Amen." And I also added my Amen, to that of the holy prophet.

The prophet then enquired of me, on what account this great permission and privilege was given to me? (By which I understand the saints in heaven are ignorant of what is done on earth: how then can prayers be directed to them?)

I then rehearsed what I have here set down by way of introduction: at which the holy prophet broke forth into this exclamation.

Elijah. Glory for ever be ascribed to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for his unbounded goodness, and great condescension to the weakness of a poor doubting sinner; after which he said, now give attention to what I shall speak. And then he thus began:

Elijah. What you have seen and heard already I am sure you never can relate so as to make it understood: for it is beyond what eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or what the heart of man is able to conceive. I mean of those not yet translated to this glorious state, nor freed from their gross elementary bodies: nor is my being in the body here, any objection to what I now assert; for though it has not been subject to the common lot of mortals, death; yet has it suffered such a change, as has been in some sense equivalent thereto; for it is made both spiritual and impassable; and is now no more capable

of any further suffering, than those blessed angels are, that compass round the throne: and yet in this consummate state of happiness, I cannot utter all that I enjoy; nor do I know what shall be yet enjoyed, for here our happiness is always new.

Epen. I then requested of the blessed prophet a little to explain himself, because I understood not how happiness could be consummate, and yet admit of new additions. For in the world below, we generally think that what is consummate, is completely finished. I humbly hope, said I, what I shall say, may not be taken as the effect of a vain curiosity, but that my understanding may be cultivated, which yet retains but dark ideas of these heavenly things.

Elijah. To satisfy your doubting soul, and to confirm your wavering faith, is the chief reason of your being brought hither, through the permission of the great Three One; and therefore I would have you still, as any doubt arises in your breast, to make it known. But as to that which you object, that happiness cannot be consummate, and yet admit of new additions, I must tell you, that when the soul and body both are happy, as mine now are, I count it a consummate state of happiness: for through all the innumerable ages of eternity, it is the soul and body joined together in the blessed resurrection-state, that shall be the continued subject of this happiness: but in respect to the blessed object of it, which is the ever-adorable and blessed God, in whose beatifical vision this happiness consists, it is for ever new; for the divine perfections being infinite, nothing less than eternity can be sufficient to display their glory, which makes our happiness eternally admit of new additions; and by a necessary consequence our knowledge of it shall be eternally progressive too.

And therefore it was not without reason that the great apostle of the Gentiles, (who, in the days of his mortality, was once admitted hither as you are,) affirmed—Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him.—And yet the eye hath seen many admirable things in nature; it hath seen mountains of chrystal, and rocks of diamonds; it hath seen mines of gold, and coasts of pearl, and spicy islands; and yet the eye that hath seen so many wonders in the world below, could never pry into the glories of this triumphant state. And though the ear of man hath heard many delightful and harmonious sounds, even all that art and nature could supply him with; yet has he never heard the heavenly melody which here both saints and angels make before the throne. And as the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, so neither can the heart of man conceive them, and yet the heart of man, (the chiefest work of the all-wise Creator in that microcosm,) is of so fine and curious a composition, that it can almost conceive any thing that either is, or was, or ever shall be, in the world below; yea, what shall never be. **M**an can conceive that every stone on earth shall be turned into the most orient pearls, and every blade of grass into the brightest and most shining jewels: he can conceive that every particle of dust shall be turned into silver, and the whole earth into a mass of pure refined gold: he can conceive the air to be turned into a chrystal, and every star advanced into a sun; and every sun a thousand times more large and glorious than what he now beholds it: and yet this is infinitely short of what the high eternal Majesty, (who is incomprehensible in all his works of wonder,) hath here prepared for all his persevering and faithful followers. But that you may retain, (added the prophet,) the

best idea of our happiness, I here will briefly represent unto you, (for ages spent in this delightful theme would scarce suffice to tell it you at large,) what it is those blessed souls who, through the glorious purchase of our bright Redeemer, are brought hither, are here delivered from; and for your better understanding it, I shall endeavour to conform my words to your capacity, by the comparing things that are here above to what you know below, although your eyes have told you how infinitely heavenly things transcend whatever can be found on earth. And in the second place I shall represent, (as far as your capacity will bear it,) what is that happiness the blessed here enjoy.

First, then, The souls of all the blessed here are freed for ever, from whatsoever it is can make them miserable; the chief of which, you are not ignorant, is sin: it is only that which brings the creature into misery, and entails it on him: the blessed God, at first, made all things happy; all like himself, who is supremely so; and had not sin defaced the beauty of Heaven's workmanship, angels nor men had never known what is meant by misery: it was sin threw the apostate angels down into Hell, and spoiled the beauty of the lower world: it was sin defaced God's image in man's soul, and made the Lord of the creation a slave to his own lust; and by so doing, plunges himself into an ocean of eternal misery, from whence there is no redemption; and sure it is an invaluable mercy, that in this happy place all the inhabitants are freed, for ever freed from sin, through the blood of our redeeming Jesus: to whom blessing, honour, power, glory and eternal praises, be ascribed for ever. Below, the best and holiest souls groan underneath the burthen of corruption; sin cleaves to all they do, and leads them captive oft-times against their wills. Who shall

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deliver me? has been the cry of many of God's faith-
ful servants, who at the same time have been dear
to Jesus. Sin is the heavy clog of saints themselves,
while they are embodied in corrupted flesh; and,
therefore, when they lay their bodies down, their
souls are like a bird loosed from its cage, and with
an heavenly vigour mount up to this blessed region,
triumphing over sin, with which below they still
maintained a combat. But here their warfare is at
an end, and Death is swallowed up in victory. Here
their bright souls, that were below deformed and
stained by sin, are, by the ever-blessed Jesus, pre-
sented to the eternal Father, without spot or wrinkle.

But, secondly, As here the blessed souls are freed
from sin, so are they likewise from all occasions of
it; which is a great addition to our happiness.—
Adam himself in Paradise, though he was in his first
creation perfectly innocent, and free from sin, yet
was he not freed from temptation to it, which was
his great unhappiness: Satan got into Paradise to
tempt him, and he too fatally yielded to his temp-
tations: he eat of the forbidden fruit, and fell; and
by his fall, the human nature, and consequently his
posterity, all are corrupted: sin, like a gangrene,
having eat into the human nature, and corrupted all
mankind.

And that corruption, which every mortal harbours
in his breast, is a most dangerous, and often times
prevailing tempter: but here each blessed soul is
likewise freed from this. No devil here can tempt
them, nor no corruption enter: nothing but what is
pure and holy can find admission here: no sly sug-
gestions from that apostate spirit can molest us here:
that roaring lion that below is in constant motion,
still traversing the earth, and seeking whom he may
devour, is, with respect to us in this blessed region
life and immortality, bound fast in everlasting chains,

and shut up safe in an infernal prison, doomed to the vengeance of eternal fire. Nor shall the world, (which by the fall of man has lost its beauty, and is degenerated into a shop of emptiness and vanity, and does, by its bewitching charms and false allurements, draw thousands to perdition,) be any more a tempter to those blessed souls, who have, through faith and patience, overcome its wiles, and arrived safely here. As strong as its temptations and allurements are to saints themselves, who are still militating with it in the world below, we that are here possessed of heavenly mansions, look with contempt on all terrene enjoyments: we here are got above the world, and all it can tempt us with; and through the blood of our triumphing Jesus, have got the victory over it, as these bright palms we bear do evidence. There is nothing here that can disturb our peace, but an eternal calm crowns all our happiness, being freed from sin, and all temptations to it. And as a consequent hereof,

Thirdly, We are here freed from the effects of sin, and that is punishment; which those that are confined to the dark regions of eternal misery are ever groaning under; as that which they cannot bear, and yet as that which they must ever suffer. It was sin that ushered death into the world below, and by Heaven's high decree, is the just wages of it, as every mortal finds: but through the conquest of the Prince of Life, the Lamb of God, slain from the world's foundation, who by his dying overcome both death and him that had the power thereof, the devil, triumphing over sin, death, and hell; sin, death, and hell, are banished hence for ever: for which eternal songs of praise and triumph are ever rendered to his holy name. These are the things, (continued the great prophet,) we are in this blessed state delivered from; and yet these make up but the least

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part of the happiness of Heaven; our joys are posi-
tive, as well as privative; and what are those, I now
proceed to show you.

I. We here enjoy the beatifick vision, the blessed
spring and eternal source of all our happiness: but
what this is I can no more declare, than finite crea-
tures comprehend infinity; only we find that it con-
tinually irradiates our understandings, and fills our
souls with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and
with a love so flaming, that nothing but the blessed
author of it can satisfy; nor not eternity itself can
terminate: it is the reflecting brightness of the Divine
presence, and transcendently glorious emanations
of his goodness, that is the life of our lives, the soul
of our souls, and the heaven of our heavens; and
that which makes us live, and love, and sing, and
praise for ever, and which transforms our souls in-
to his blessed likeness. The saints below, whilst
they are travelling to this blessed country, are in
their pilgrimage supported by his everlasting arms:
by which they are enabled to go from grace to grace,
but we that are safe landed on the haven of eternal
happiness, are changed from glory unto glory, even
by the spirit of the Lord. But to bring things near-
er to your understanding, by this beholding of God's
face, we have a real participation and enjoyment of
his love, and his blessed smiles make glad our souls,
and in his favour we rejoice continually; for in his
favour is life. And then by this blessed vision of
God, we come to know him above whatever any did
below; for it is a sight of him that irradiates our un-
derstandings, and gives us the light of the know-
ledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ:
so that though it be impossible to comprehend the
Divine majesty, (for who can find out the Almighty
to perfection,) yet we have here a perfect apprehen-
sion of his nature and divine attributes.

II. We have here not only the beatifick vision, whereby we see God as he is; but we have a real enjoyment and fruition of him; and thereby come to be united to him, and to live in him, and he in us; whereby we come to be partakers of the Divine nature, which shines forth in us with a resplendent brightness. In the world below, the saints do indeed enjoy God in his ordinances; but here we all enjoy him face to face: below, the saints enjoy God in measure, but here we enjoy him without measure: there they have some sips of his goodness, but here we have large draughts thereof, and swim in the boundless ocean of happiness: below, the saint's communion is many times broken off, and discontinued; but here we have an uninterrupted enjoyment of God; without intermission or cessation.

III. Here we enjoy the perfection of all grace: in the world below, the saints see but in part, and know but in part: but here, that which is perfect being enjoyed, that which is imperfect is done away:—below, love is mixed with fear, and fear hath torment; but here, love is perfect, and perfect love casteth out fear: here we love the blessed God more than ourselves, and one another like ourselves: we here are all the children of one Father, and all our brethren are alike dear unto us: below, our love was still divided, and run in several channels; but here our love has but one stream, and centres in the ever blessed God, the fountain of our happiness. Our knowledge likewise in the world below was very imperfect, seeing but darkly, as through a broken mirror; but here we see God as he is, and so come to know him as we are known. Our joy is likewise here in its perfection; in the world below it was interrupted by sorrow and sighing, and it was necessarily so, for where there is sin, there will be sorrow: but here all sin, (the cause of sorrow,) be-

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ing done away, all sorrow, (the effect of sin,) shall likewise cease: nay, our very sorrow for sin, when upon earth, does, through the bounty of our blessed Redeemer, give an accession to our joy, now we are here.

IV. Here we have our capacities enlarged according to the greatness of the objects we have to contemplate; whilst we were in the world below, no light could shine into our minds, but through the windows of our senses, and therefore it was the blessed God was pleased to condescend to our capacities, and to adapt the expressions of his majesty to the narrowness of our imaginations: but here, the revelation of the Deity is much more glorious, and our minds are clarified from all those earthly images that flow through the gross channels of the senses. Below, our purest conceptions of God were very imperfect; but here the gold is separated from the dross, and our conceptions are more proper and becoming the simplicity and purity of God. Below, the objects of glory were humbled to the perceptions of sense; but here the sensible faculties are raised and refined, and made the subjects of glory. Now therefore, that the Divine light shines with direct beams, and the thick curtains of flesh are spiritualized and transparent, the soul enjoys the clearest visions of God. We now see what we before believed of the glorious nature of the ever-blessed God, his decrees and counsels, his providence and dispensations. We here clearly see, that from eternity, God was sole existing, but not solitary; and that the God-head is neither confused in unity, nor divided in number; that there is a propriety of order, but no superiority among the sacred persons of the ineffable Trinity, but that they are equally possessed of the same divine excellencies, and the same divine empire, and are equally the ob-

ject of the same divine adoration. Those ways of God, that seemed below unsearchable, and that we thought unlawful to enquire into, we here see to be the product of Divine wisdom, with so much perspicuity and clearness, that truth itself is not more evident.

These things, (added the prophet in a different tone,) are some of those that constitute our happiness.

Yet all these things are only what relate unto our souls: but still the happiness of the inhabitants of this blessed region is not complete, until their bodies are raised and re-united to their souls; in which, through the Divine munificence, myself and the blessed Enoch, do enjoy a more peculiar preference, being translated hither in the body, as types both to the anti and post-diluvian world, of the resurrection of the ever-adorable Son of God, and of the saints through him. Now because none but the great Messiah has been actually raised from the dead, he being the first fruits thereof, (for as for Enoch and myself, our bodies have not known death, though they have received a change equivalent thereto,) it is therefore most difficult to declare what the resurrection state shall be, it being to be discerned in its perfection, only from his glorious body, to which neither that of Enoch's nor mine are comparable, in respect to the glory thereof, though both are spiritual bodies; of which I will now show the distinct properties.

I. The bodies of the blessed here, at the resurrection, shall be, (as mine is now,) spiritual bodies; and by your not only seeing, but touching me, (at which word the holy prophet was pleased to give me his hand,) you may be the better able to know what I mean by spiritual body: that is, a body rarified from all gross allays of corruption, and made

a pure and refined body, and yet a substantial one; not composed of wind and air, as mortals below are apt too grossly to imagine.

Epen. Here I entreated the holy prophet to bear with me, if I acquainted him, that I always understood spiritual as opposed to material, and consequently that a spiritual body must be immaterial, and so not capable of being felt, as I found it was.

Elij. To this the prophet replied—That their bodies were spiritual, not only as they were purified from all corruption, but as they were sustained by the enjoyment of God, without any material refreshments, as meat, drink, sleep and raiment, which were the support of our bodies below. Have you not read, (said the prophet,) that the blessed Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared in his body to his disciples, when they were met together in a chamber, and the doors shut about them; which plainly evidences the tenuity thereof: and yet he called to St. Thomas to come and reach his hand and thrust it into his side, which shows it as plainly to be substantial. The beatifick vision is here what both our souls and bodies live upon and are supported by for ever.

II. Our bodies in the resurrection shall be immortal, and incapable of dying: below their bodies are all mortal, dying and perishing, and subject to be crumbled into dust every moment: but here our bodies will be incorruptible, and freed from death for ever, for our corruption here shall put on incorruption, and our mortality be swallowed up of life.

Epen. Here I desired the prophet to bear with me a little, whilst I gave him an account of my own notions in this matter.

Elij. Say on, for I am ready to solve your doubt.

Epen. I have learnt, said I, in the holy scriptures, that immortality is an attribute that belongs to God

only, and not to men, especially to the bodies of men, which every day's experience tells us are mortal. Therefore St. Paul tells Timothy that God **ONLY** hath immortality.

Elij. When I say the bodies of the blessed here are immortal, I intend it of bodies in their raised state, that then they are subject unto death no more: man in his corruptible state is mortal, and subject unto death: and there is nothing more evident to all that dwell in the world below, and even the bodies of all those glorified souls that are here, are at this time kept under the power of death. But at the resurrection-state, when they shall be raised up again, they shall then be immortal. And as to what you argue from the scripture, that the blessed God has **ONLY** immortality, it is very true; he is most eminently and essentially so; whereas there is no creature, either angel or man, that can in that strict sense be said to be so. We are immortal, through his grace and favour, but God is immortal in his essence, and has been so from all eternity, and in that sense may well be said **ONLY** to have immortality. And therefore it will not be amiss for you to observe—That whatever the blessed God is, he is eminently and essentially so; in which respect, it is likewise said of him—That he only is holy; and there is none good but God, none righteous nor none merciful but he: to whom be blessing and glory, and honour, and praise, for ever, and for ever more.

Epen. I have one thing more to be satisfied in, and that is, that seeing there is only yourself and the prophet Enoch that are permitted in the body to be here, which you are pleased to say have suffered a change equivalent to death, but died not; what assurance have you that the bodies of the blessed that are now under the power of death, shall

be raised again? For I see they are gloriously blessed and happy without their bodies, and seem not to have any occasion for them; they have been long since perished and rotted in their graves: the greatest thing that I think can be said for it, is, that the ever blessed Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, who was truly and really dead, is now alive, and lives for ever.

Elij. To this the prophet, interrupting me, replied, what greater proof can you desire than this?

Epen. What I have to say to that, is, that the body of the blessed Jesus never saw corruption; and that there is no instance of any body that ever saw corruption, that was yet raised to life and immortality.

Elij. To this the prophet again answered—That though it was true, there had been no such instance, yet was the resurrection of the body as sure as the present glorification of the soul; for as the blessed Jesus died as a publick person, so did he also rise again; and therefore is said to be the first fruits from the dead; he is the head of the church, and cannot be complete without his body, who in their order shall be raised up to be with him for ever.—The body shall be awaked out of its dead sleep, and as I was saying, quickened into a glorious immortal life; the body is an essential part of man, as well as the soul: and though the inequality be great in their holy operations, yet their concurrence is necessary. Good actions in the world below, were indeed designed by the counsel and resolution of the soul, but performed by the ministry of the body; and every grace expresses itself in actions thereby. In the sorrows of repentance, tears were supplied by the bodily eyes; and in thanksgiving, the tongue was used to break forth in the praises of God: and all the victories over pleasure and

pain below, were obtained by the soul in conjunction with the body. And can you think, (said the prophet,) that the Divine goodness will deal so differently with them, that the soul should be everlastingly happy, and the body to be lost in forgetfulness? The one glorified in heaven, the other remain in the dust? From the first setting out in the world below to the grave, they both run the same race, and therefore shall enjoy the same reward.—When the crown of righteousness and glory shall be given to the blessed at the great day in the view of all, both soul and body shall partake of the honour thereof. And this, (added the prophet,) is, I believe, enough to satisfy your doubts, as to the resurrection of the body.

Epen. To which I replied—That I had nothing further to object in that particular. And then desired him to go on in describing the glory of the body in the resurrection-state.

Upon which the prophet thus proceeded:

Elij. I have already told you, that the bodies of the blessed shall be immortal: but cannot for all that be so immortal as God is, who is so eminently and essentially so, that as you well observed, he is said ONLY to have immortality; nor yet are they immortal in the same sense as are the blessed angels, who being immaterial substances, are so created; whereas man was created mortal, and has his immortality through the purchase of the blessed Jesus, and the renovation of the Divine Image.—Nor is the immortality thus purchased for us, like that of the apostate spirits, who are immortal too; but it is with such an immortality as brings along with it a greater weight of misery. Their immortality is such a curse as makes them wish a thousand thousand times that they might be annihilated: but that blessed immortality which we enjoy, is that

which is the happiness of Heaven, and therefore rightly styled a glorious immortality, and gives us an assurance, that the happiness we now enjoy, we shall enjoy for ever.

III. Another happiness the bodies of the blessed here enjoy, is—That they are impassible, and so are made incapable of sufferings: below, the saints themselves have oftentimes their bodies made so many shops of misery; or like an hospital, full of diseases, which are the common harbingers of death; or when they are not so, are something worse than it; the infirmities of their bodies being such, as oftentimes make death much more desirable than such a life. How many times are even good men racked with the gout, or tormented by the stone, with most exquisite and excruciating pains? So that though they abound in the fullness of all those things that mortals count the blessings of the life below, yet are they thereby all imbittered to them by those tormenting pains which have seized on their bodies. And where this is not, but men have healthy, strong and vigorous bodies, they often meet with other sufferings, and are exposed to hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness, which render their lives very much uncomfortable: there, many times, they are shut up in prisons, immured between stone walls, and are as if were buried while they are alive, and are as men forgotten in the world. All which considered, must needs render their bodies miserable while below.

But, in this happy region, no such evils can attack them; here their condition is extremely different; no curse can enter here; and such are all those things I have related, as being only the effects of sin. My body is incapable of suffering any evil, either of sin or sorrow; but on the contrary, through the grace of the blessed Son of God, is now become a receptacle both of light and glory, and so shall all

the bodies of the saints be likewise, in their resurrection-state. Which leads me to declare the fourth endowment, with which our bodies shall be ever blessed.

IV. Another happiness our bodies shall enjoy in the blessed resurrection-state, is, that they shall be truly beautiful. And this is none of our least privileges; for below, our bodies are but vile bodies, tending to corruption in the grave, worms gnaw and feed upon their flesh, and thence proceeds a loathsome flavour: at the best, they are but houses of clay, and their foundation is in the dust, but here it shall be otherwise; for the bodies of the saints shall be freed from those innocent infirmities that were inseparable from Adam in Paradise, whose souls united to the body was the fountain of the natural sensitive life, which being in a perpetual flux, there was a necessity of continual repairs to preserve his life in vigour: whereas, in this blessed state, the body shall be spiritual in its qualities, and the principle of its life supported by the supernatural power of the spirit, without outward nourishment; and not only so, but a substantial and unfading glory shall shine in them, infinitely above the perishing pride of this world, and the glory of the flesh, and be made like unto the glorious body of Christ, who will change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like his glorious body; and this he will do, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself; this transcendent beauty, which he will put upon the body, shall be the work of his own hands; and where omnipotence interposes, nothing is difficult. For the beautifying of a raised body, and putting it into an immortal state of glory, is as easy to the Divine power, as the first framing in the womb.

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V. Another part of our happiness is, that our bodies shall be agile bodies, and move with an inconceivable swiftness; our bodies, while below, are lumpish and heavy, and are as clogs, to the soul; but in the raised state it shall be otherwise; our bodies shall be like the chariots of Aminadab, and move far swifter than the winged fowls in the aerial heavens.

VI. Another thing in which our happiness will very much consist, is, that our bodies then, (as mine is now,) shall be all pure; and this is an exceeding privilege: for though they should have all the other fore-mentioned qualities, and be immortal, spiritual, impassible, beautiful and swift, yet if they still were sinful, it would blemish all the rest, and would even spoil the happiness we here enjoy in Heaven, if sin could enter here. But it is far otherwise; our glory is, that here our very bodies shall be pure, and have no spot of sin at all upon them—below, indeed, the bodies of the saints are clogged with sin, and fettered with temptations, which makes them to cry out—O wretched man! who shall deliver me from this body of death? But here they shall enjoy that blessed redemption of their bodies, which they want for there.

VII. And to conclude, the bodies of the saints shall, in their resurrection-state, be glorious bodies; so glorious, that they shall have a near resemblance to the glorious body of our blessed Redeemer. And this the Divine oracles inform us, as also how it shall be wrought: the glorious Lamb of God, the blessed Jesus, he it is shall change our vile and corruptible bodies, and make them like to his own glorious body; it is by his power that the saints' bodies, that by their being turned into corruption, are sown in such dishonour, shall be raised in glory; and in that blessed resurrection-state, shall shine more bright

than the sun in this triumphant kingdom of their Father.

And thus, my son, said the great prophet to me, have I informed thee briefly, wherein the glory and the happiness of this blessed state, we here enjoy, consists. Not that herein I have said the thousandth part of that which might be further still related; nor could you understand it, if I should.—For there are some things here that we enjoy, like the white stone, and the new name, which no one knows but he that does receive it.

Epen. The holy prophet having made an end, I humbly thanked him for the information he had given me, and told him, that though I was incapable, (clothed as I was, with such a lump of unrefined flesh,) to understand all I had heard, or utter what I saw, yet I had seen and heard enough for ever to convince me both of the excellency and reality of heavenly things which, in the world below, so many question, and so few believe. But let it not offend my Lord, said I to the prophet, if I desire yet further to be resolved in some few things.

Elij. Speak, and I will endeavour to give you satisfaction.

Epen. The first thing, said I, I would humbly ask is, how the blessed here, which are but creatures, though thus glorified, and therefore finite still, can have so perfect an idea of the incomprehensible and infinite Three One, to know him so as we ourselves are known, as you before affirmed, or else it was my weakness to misunderstand you so?

Elij. In saying so, I did affirm no more than what the sacred oracles contain: for the apostle of the Gentiles, speaking in the days of his flesh to them that then inhabited the world below, told them, they then saw through a glass, but darkly; but that in these bright regions they should see him face to

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face; that then himself knew but in part, but that when he was once got hither, he should know him even as he was known. But, my son, said the prophet, these words are not to be understood according to the exactness of the expression; for the sun that lights the lower world, may as well be included in a small spark of fire, as the incomprehensible and infinite God may be comprehended by our finite faculties: for beyond the fullest discoveries we can possibly make of the Deity, there remains still an entire infinity of perfections, the knowledge whereof is altogether unattainable by the most intelligent of those glorious spirits, that are the bright and the continual attendants of the throne; and therefore that expression, as we are known, which gave you so just an occasion to enquire into the sense of it, is to be taken as a note of similitude, and not of equality: the dim light of a candle as truly shines as the bright luminary of the day; but not with the same extent and splendour. And therefore the sum of what I can say to this point, is, that we have here as perfect knowledge of the blessed God as created beings are capable of receiving, or our own hearts of desiring.

Epen. I then returned my humble thanks to the great prophet, and assured him, his answer had entirely satisfied me, and that I found it was only a deficiency of my own understanding that I had given him that trouble.

Elij. Still you mistake the state that I am in, replied the prophet, for there is no such thing as trouble here, nor can there be: for the diffusing of the knowledge of the ever blessed God, and setting forth his bright eternal excellencies, and the displaying of his glory, is that which gives the blessed here the greatest satisfaction and delight; and which will ever do so, throughout the numerous ages of eternity.

Epen. Then, with an air of greater confidence, I told the holy prophet, I had another question to ask him.

Elij. Say on, and I will answer you.

Epen. I saw among the many blessed souls I passed by, as my bright messenger conveyed me to you, some that appeared to me to shine with greater brightness than the others, which gave me a desire to be informed whether or no there be not among the blessed different degrees of glory.

Elij. The happiness and glory which all the blessed here enjoy, is the result of their communion with, and love unto the ever blessed God, whose beatifick vision here, as I have said before, is the eternal spring from whence it flows; the more we see, the more we love; and love assimilates our souls into the nature of the blessed object of it; and thence results our glory. This needs must therefore make a difference in the degrees thereof: not as though there were any want of love to God, in any of the blessed here, for that is impossible: there is not one soul amongst the numerous inhabitants of these bright regions, but what adores and loves the ever blessed God with all his utmost powers and faculties. But then it follows, that as those powers and faculties are different, their love must be so too, and so their glory. Nor is there any murmuring or repining in one, to see another's glory much greater than his own; but God is thereby magnified the more, as the eternal source of all their happiness. Nor can there be room for a thought, to think it otherwise: Who can complain, when all the faculties of each blessed soul is so replenished with the bright emanations of the Deity, that it can hold no more? The ever blessed God is an unbounded ocean of light and life, and joy and happiness, still filling every vessel that is put therein, till it can hold no more; and though

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the vessels are of several sizes, whilst each is filled, there is none that can complain. Besides, each blessed soul is here wrought up, not only to an acquiescence, but even to a satisfaction and complacency in the Divine good pleasure, that all their happiness consists therein. Thus, though the stars below are each one glorious, yet since they are of different magnitudes, one star exceeds another in glory; and so, as the Divine oracles inform you, it shall be in the resurrection state. My answer, therefore, to your question, is, that those who have the most enlarged faculties, do love God most, and are thereby assimilated most into his likeness, which is the highest glory Heaven can give. Nor let this seem strange to you; for even amongst God's flaming ministers, the blessed angels, there are diversities of orders, and different degrees of glory. And these, perhaps, were some of those you saw, as you passed hither.

Whilst I was thus discoursing with the holy prophet, and with delight heard the solution of those doubts that I had long desired to be resolved in, a shining form approached me, saying, How! Epenetus here?

I was surprised to hear my name thus mentioned, and turning suddenly about, I soon perceived it was the noble Junius, my late deceased friend, who thus accosted me.

Jun. Dear Epenetus, I am glad to see you in these blessed regions; but am surprised to see you here not yet divested of mortality. Instruct me, friend, by what means you came hither, and also, how it was you obtained this privilege; for the unusualness of such a thing is that which makes me so inquisitive.

Epen. I was so overjoyed to see one of my old acquaintances, and one with whom I had been so fa-

miliar in the world, that I essayed to embrace him in my arms; which he refused, telling me mildly, he had some time ago laid down his body, which he had left below, resting in hope until the resurrection; and that, though he was still indeed a substance, yet it was an immaterial one, not to be touched by mortal.

But how came you, said he again, more earnestly, to be brought hither in your mortal and unchanged body?

Epen. I then related to him what I had before spoken to Elijah, and told at large in the prefixed introduction to this Vision, of my temptation and deliverance.

Jun. Well, Epenetus, said the noble Junius, I see then there was need enough of such a lecture as I gave order to be set on foot in the poor world below, after my death, to evidence the being of the Deity, against a sort of men, far worse than those in hell, who both believe the being of a God, and tremble at his justice. But you, my friend, that had so long made a profession of his truth, and had such great experience of his goodness, that you should after all be brought to question his being and his existence, was, indeed, something more than ordinary, and what I hardly could have ever thought; and gives me fresh occasion to adore the ever blessed God, who through his abundant goodness has now delivered me from all those snares the enemy of souls was laying for me; and thus preserved me to his heavenly kingdom: blessed for ever be his holy name.

The blessed Elijah, having heard what my friend Junius said, told me, he now would leave me to my friend; and, ere I was aware, the prophet winged away—who having left us, I addressed myself thus to my noble friend:

Epen. I could not doubt, said I, my dearest Junius, but that thou wert one of the blessed inhabitants of this happy region; for such a bright and flaming zeal as that which in the world made thee so eminent, must needs meet with a suitable reward.

Jun. O Epenetus, answered he, wert thou but once divested of mortality, thou wouldst have other thoughts than what thou hast: thou wouldst then see how infinitely short they fall of meriting the least reward, who in the world below have done their utmost; and that it is only grace, free and unmerited, that brings the soul to glory. For Heaven is purchased at no other price than that of the Redeemer's precious blood; whose dying love, and whose redeeming mercy, are so unspeakably, so vastly great, eternity will scarce suffice to utter it.

Epen. Well, said I, worthy Junius.

Jun. Call me not worthy, said he, (interrupting me,) for none are worthy here but he that sitteth upon the throne, and the blessed Lamb of God; and to ascribe all glory unto him, is here a great part of our happiness; for there are myriads of saints and angels round the throne, continually crying with a loud but yet melodious voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* No, no, (continued he,) my Epenetus, here is no ascribing any thing to creatures: here, they that wear the brightest crowns, cast them before the throne, saying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power.*

Epen. Dear Junius, bear with me, said I, a little, because I am still clogged with mortality. O that I were but once divested of it! That I, with thee, might see the great Three One; and, seeing, be transformed into his likeness; which, as I have heard Elijah tell, is the completion of all happiness.

Jun. My dear Epenetus, replied Junius, with an air of composed love and sweetness, the beatifick vision is that which does indeed complete our happiness, and fills our souls with love and joy that is inexpressible, and which is only known by them that feel it. But you must know, my Epenetus, the strongest and the most enlarged faculties of all the bright intelligences here, can bear but little of those radiant effluxes of Divine glory, they are so overcoming; for there is no comparison between the most capacious of created beings, and the ineffable glory of the great Creator.

Epen. O noble Junius, I replied, I already believe what you have said; but yet, methinks, I am willing to know all I can never know enough of. And since I know there is nothing more delightful than to be always exercised in the displaying of the glory of the great Author of our happiness, deny not, dearest Junius, to your friend, (for such you know I ever was and am,) the satisfaction of hearing from your lips, the mighty wonders of Divinest Love; that I may join with you to sing his praise: display those mysteries of his Providence, which to the world below are all enigmas, but to your enlarged understanding, are seen in their true light.

Jun. The praises of the Divine Majesty, O my dear Epenetus, will be the mighty subject of our song, through all the ages of eternity; in which both saints and angels join together, and make up one great chorus. And therefore, that which you have asked of me, I will gladly undertake. That you may see, by that which he has done, that he alone is worthy of your love, and of those praises we ascribe unto him. For the most ardent love of all the blessed saints and angels here, is nothing else but the reflection of his love to us: for he that lay in LOVE's own bosom tells us, We love him be-

cause he first loved us. Since, therefore, my dear Epenetus, the love of God to us is the foundation of our love to him, let me present you first with an idea of his love to us, and the advantages that we receive thereby, which are so many they are past reckoning up, the mighty sum exceeding all arithmetick can count. But that I may, as you were intimating, set things in their true light, I will first show you how much we owe to his love and goodness, for all his free and unreserved favours vouchsafed to us in the world below. And therefore, to begin—

First, In the world below, we owed unto his goodness no less than all the goods we were possessed of: all that we were, and all that we enjoyed, was wholly owing to him. For it was he that made us, and not we ourselves; and we were in his hands so like the clay that is in the potter's, he might have made us other creatures: nay, more, we were so much that negative from whence we were extracted, that, had he pleased, he might for ever have left us to that first nothing from whence we had our being. Needs must his love then be the first and original fountain blessing; all other blessings being but as conduit-pipes, by which he does convey his love unto us; and he that sees not through all, is blind. Perhaps a man gets applause by his wisdom, and through his industry he heaps up treasures: but, was it not from God he had that wisdom? And did he not both give and prosper all his boasted industry? Sure, God as much gave us all we enjoyed, as he that gives a beggar a thousand pounds, gives him his food and raiment and all that a thousand pounds can help him to, and which he had been otherwise without.

Secondly, But then, besides all these more obvious presents of his bounty, there were many things which, in the world below, we were delivered from,

that do as much enhance the value of the Divine Goodness to us; which, although perhaps less conspicuous, are no less prized by those below, whom want of them makes sensible of their true value. Should I, my Epenetus, but lead your thoughts unto the gallies, and show you there those wretched captives that lie chained unto their oars, exposed to all the miseries and hardships of a tempestuous sea, and yet do, through the barbarous treatment that they meet with on shore, less fear the ocean than any port, save death. O, should I draw the curtains of sick and dying men, and open to you the sad scenes of sorrow, on which so many pine and languish by distempers, so very grievous to be borne, that death is rather to be chosen than life: or should I bring you to the hospitals, and show you there the various shapes of human miseries, would you not, my dear Epenetus, think it a mercy worth acknowledging, to be delivered from them? And, ought we not to prize the Divine Goodness who has thus made us differ, and freed us from those various sorts of miseries to which so many mortals are exposed? Not but sometimes his wisdom sees it meet to exercise his own beloved children with long continued sickness and sharp pains, and other outward great calamities: but this, my Epenetus, is still a further evidence of love, and that he might preserve them from the far worse contagion of their sins, or cure them of the evil habits which they had contracted. Have you not seen, my Epenetus, (when in the world below,) a tender mother apply a painful caustick to the neck of her beloved infant, when threatened with an apoplexy? And have you not concluded from it, she thinks the trouble of an issue an inferiour evil to convulsion fits? So, when we see the ever blessed God, our Heavenly Father, does send infirmities and crosses, to rescue those he

loves from under sin's dominion, we safely may conclude, he thinks affliction a far less evil than the guilt of sin; since he is too wise and too indulgent a physician to cure with such a remedy as shall be worse than the disease.

You may remember, Epenetus, that God, by Moses, gives the Israelites a caution, lest prosperity, (which is so apt to make men forget all but their enjoyments,) should make any of them say in their hearts, My power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth: but, on the contrary, commands them to remember the Lord their God, for it is he that gives them power to get wealth. And there was need enough of such a caution, for we were too apt to forget that God gave us our corn, and our wine, and our oil. But, thirdly—

The Divine Goodness exceedingly recommends the advantageousness of his love to us, in that whilst we were below, he gave us so great an earnest of spiritual goods, and of expected joys, that made even that earnest large enough to subsist upon with comfort; and which really outvalued, and far transcended all those momentary pleasures it required us to forsake, or keep up a title to eternal ones.

But though the mercies that the ever blessed God bestowed upon us in the life below, were both so many and so great, as made it a fit theme to praise him for in Heaven; yet is his love of a more lasting date than any thing that is known in the lower world: it dies not with our bodies, nor like the usual custom of our friends below, accompany us to our graves, and leave us: No, Epenetus, God's love appears most bright when our dark eyes are closed; and then cleaves closest to the soul when she forsakes the body; giving each blessed saint that arrives here, good ground to say to him, what Naomi once did to Boaz, That he had not left off

his kindness to the living and the dead. And therefore, Now indeed (says our great Saviour's happy favourite) are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know when we shall appear, we shall be like him. And what that is, is now my present theme.

It is the love of God, the ever blessed God, my Epenetus, that gives us this admission into Heaven: Heaven is the bright seat of so much happiness, that we here hardly count it amongst our joys, that Heaven is the seat of them. And here the excellency of the things that we possess, does as much disappoint our expectations, as in fruitions in the world below, the emptiness is wont to do. For you have already heard the apostle tell us, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. And now, Epenetus, our experience tells us so: those pure refined delights that we enjoy, not only stoop not unto sense, but are sublime enough to transcend imagination. For whatsoever our fancy formed below, as the most perfect ideas, and most abstracted notions of complete happiness, our own more happy experience is of greater, plainly evince, came short of what we find. Heaven is a soil, whose fruitfulness is so confined to joy, that even our disappointments and mistakes, when in the world below, do here contribute to our happiness, which does so much partake of his immensity, whose gift it is, that even the sacred oracles themselves give but a negative description of it; and does not only remove our thoughts from all that we enjoyed below, but does exalt them above whatever we could fancy there. Nor will you wonder, Epenetus, that it should be so, if you will but consider, that here our faculties are not only gratified with suitable and accepta-

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ble objects, but are so heightened and enlarged, that our capacities are both increased and filled. You know, that in the world below, a child not yet released out of the homely prison of the womb, can there have no idea of those delights, which by the pleasing noises and the glittering objects that will present themselves to him, after his birth, will afford him. And the same child, whilst he continues in his nonage, though he may with delight look upon emblems finely drawn and painted, yet he cannot imagine what pleasure the same objects will afford him, when age and study shall have ripened his intellectuals, and made him capable of understanding the excellent moralities contained in those curious emblems. Such a double advantage, Epenetus, among others, the admission into these sacred mansions, brings to all those to whom that blessing is vouchsafed. For, besides that set of objects, if I may so speak, so new and so peculiar to this place, that their ideas could never once enter into their thoughts before they were admitted hither. Besides this, our now enlarged capacities enable us, even in objects not altogether unknown to us before, to perceive things formerly undiscerned, and derive thence both new and greater satisfaction and delight.

Wonder not, my Epenetus, that in describing of these glorious things, I use expressions you have not before been used to hear; since my bright theme is more above our praises, than this blessed region is above the earth. For though my language may seem tumid and aspiring, yet seeming hyperboles may well be used in the description of felicities, which make the most hyperboles but seeming ones: for the joys of Heaven appear (like what the stars do to the world below, by reason of their remoteness from them,) extremely little, though really in themselves they are so vast, that a less than the lar-

gest is much greater than the biggest object upon earth; nay, than the whole earth itself. And therefore, Epenetus, I endeavour, (considering you are still clothed with mortality,) to give you an account of heavenly things, by representations transcending what they appear to you, that I may thereby give you notions less inferiour to what they truly are.

For here, my Epenetus, the blessed enjoy happiness enough to rectify all those mistaken notions we had formed to ourselves of it below. We are instructed here both how to name and rate all the felicity which we possess, which is made up of the confluences of perfection, and perpetuity of all true joys, being made happy (unlike to what philosophy pretends to) not by the confinement, but full fruition of our utmost desires, which neither fail in the choice of their objects, nor miss in the enjoyment of them; but are unerringly just, and infallibly accomplished. Here we not only see, but are made like those blessed saints whom we in the world below so much admired. Those spirits of just men made perfect, of which the Divine oracles have told us, are here our constant and familiar company, into whose blessed society we are not only welcome, but increase it. Here, likewise, we behold those glorious spirits, whose nature does invest them with so bright a lustre, that all the disadvantages their disguises gave them when they appeared to us below, would scarce suffice to hinder us from making them the objects of our admiration.

But above all, we here behold, my Epenetus, a sight worthy the dying of that blessed LAMB of GOD, slain from the world's foundation in the Divine decree; that glorious SAVIOUR of whom the scriptures do so much and excellently entertain us, and who having done and suffered so much for us, does so highly deserve of us, both upon the score of his in-

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finite perfections, and upon the account of his inestimable benefits. Yes, Epenetus, here we behold that holy and divine Person, who, when he did vouchsafe to pitch his tent among the sons of men below, and dwell with them on earth, thereby to fit them, by his merits and example, to dwell with him in Heaven, did in so admirable a manner mix an awful majesty with an humble meekness, and the assumed infirmities of his human nature with the corruscations of his divine, expressing in his whole life so perfect and exemplary a virtue, with so much sweetness and gentleness towards those that were aspirers to it, though they came most short of it, that even the Jews themselves could say of him, That he had done all things well: nay, more, his very enemies that were employed to apprehend him as a malefactor, confessed to those that sent them to do so, that "never man spake like him." But there, my Epenetus, this blessed Son of God was in the form of a servant, which he put on, that he might suffer for us, that he might exercise his priestly and prophetick function in the world below: but here we see him in that regal state and condition that belongs to him by virtue of his kingly office, on the account whereof he is styled, The King of kings, and Lord of lords, all power and authority being invested in him, both in Heaven and earth, encompassed with such radiant majesty and shining splendour, that we may well esteem him, what the great evangelick prophet long since called him, The ADMIRABLE. For here our ravished souls, by an attentive contemplation of his glories, still find more cause to imitate the spouse in Solomon's mystick epithalamium, who having dwelt upon the beauty of the several excellencies that concurred to the accomplishing the Divine Bridegroom, breaks out in this epiphonema, He is altogether lovely! His sparkling eyes appear in his exalted

glory upon the throne, (which the beloved disciple long since represented them,) like flames of active fire, and go into the ravished breasts of the beholders, shoot flames as pure, as holy and as deathless, as what the seraphims themselves consist of. And, surely, Epenetus, since the divine oracles do assure us, as I have said already, It never entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has here reserved for those that love him: that glory can be but imperfectly expressed by the bare epithet of inconceivable, with which the blessed God rewards the meritorious sufferings and obedience of the only begotten Son of his love, for whose sake he is pleased to confer on all the numerous company of the elect, such unimaginable glories. He that vouchsafes unto so many of his servants a brightness like that of the stars, you cannot but think, Epenetus, does communicate a far more radiant lustre to the Son of Righteousness; although your present mortal state denies you to behold the brightness of his glory.

But all this glorious greatness of our blessed Redeemer, does not yet make his kindness less familiar, but only more obliging: for he disdains not, even after his ascension hither, to say, Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me. And that King, in the parable by whom our blessed Lord is represented, is pleased himself to welcome each individual trusty servant with a peculiar, Well done good and faithful servant.

Wonder not, Epenetus, that I seem so solicitous to give you an account of the high dignity and super-eminent felicity of our exalted Saviour; and that I have endeavoured thus to let you know, that the bright sun of righteousness is now incapable of suffering eclipses, but shines with an unclouded and an

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unequalled splendour; and that I now see Jesus, who, (as the author of the Hebrews speaks,) was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour. For it makes Heaven to be more than Heaven to me, to find him reigning here, who suffered so much for me in the world below. And our Redeemer's happiness, which is so great and so ineffable, brings an increase to ours, according to the ardency of our love to him. Nay, further, Epenetus, let me add, that though our joys are here so great, they do not need endearing circumstances, (yet does it make our happiness more happy, as it is a proof of our Redeemer's love,) than as it is a donative of his bounty.

If it was matter of rejoicing to the disgraced apostles, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, how much, think you, is their joy, now they are admitted to reign with him? His having supported the hardships and toils, to which the afflicted condition of our mortality was exposed, did so much alleviate them, and refresh us under them, that even in this sense also it might be truly said, The chastisements of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we were healed.

But can you think, Epenetus, that he who has relieved us, even by his cross, does not do more for us by his crown? Here he not only does admit, but does invite, each faithful servant to no less a blessing than to enter into his Master's joy. So rich a source of happiness did Christ make himself to us, in all his capacities and conditions, that in earth and Heaven it was and is his gracious and constant employment, to share our griefs, or to impart to us his joys; and either lessen our miseries by his sufferings, or increase our happiness by his felicity.

Having thus treated of the happiness of those celestial mansions, resulting from the beatifick sight of

our redeeming Lord, the crown of all our blessedness, I now proceed to tell you, Epenetus, what you perhaps may have observed already; that here we do not only see our elder brother, Christ, but also our friends, kindred and relations, that in the world below lived in his fear, and died in his favour, which is a large addition to our happiness. Nor do we only know our friends, relations and cotemporaries, but all the saints that lived in all the ages of the world. Thus, though Elijah, whom I found discoursing with you, lived in the world below, long before the blessed Messiah was made flesh, yet you no sooner saw than you straight knew him; and so you will do Adam also, when you see him. Nor can I think this a new notion to you, since you might long ago have learned it from the sacred oracles: our blessed Saviour himself having told us, not only that the children of the resurrection shall be like the angels, (who, in the visions of the prophet Daniel, and the apostle John, appeared to be acquainted with each other,) but also in the parable of the miserable rich man and the happy beggar, the father of the faithful is represented as knowing not only the person and present condition, but also the past story of Lazarus; and the apostle of the Gentiles did, when in the world below, expect his converted and pious Thessalonians to be his crown, at the great day, when the having turned many to righteousness shall, as the beloved Daniel tells us, confer a star-like and immortal brightness. And I am sure, Epenetus, you have often read of the transfiguration of the blessed Redeemer in the holy mount, where Moses and Elijah were discoursing with him, and then you cannot forget how readily the three disciples knew them. This was no other but a type of Heaven, where all the saints are known to one another. Think you our knowledge here is less than

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that which Adam had in his first state of innocence? And yet you know that Adam knew Eve, his wife, when she was first brought to him, and told her, she was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. But what need of further instance? Your own experience has already told you that it is so; and were you but divested of your mortality, as in a few days you will, you will find it with far greater evidence.

But let me show you, my dear Epenetus, the great advantage that the knowledge of each other, here, does bring to all the blessed.

Here it is that the blessed dwell in an uninterrupted, perfect union and communion with God, and with each other; but without knowledge can be no agreement, and without agreement no communion; and where there is no communion, there is no happiness; so that to think we did not know each other, would be to think us short of happiness. Here, Epenetus, the general assembly of the first born, as they receive their happiness from the bright vision of the ever blessed God, so they communicate the purest pleasure to each other; an unfeigned, ardent love uniting all that pure society. On earth our love was kindled either from some natural relation, or other civil tie; or else on the account of some visible excellencies, that render a person worthy of our choice and friendship: but here our reasons are far greater, and the decrees of love incomparably more fervent: for in this supernatural state, all carnal alliances and respects do cease. The blessed apostle, even when on earth, told us, If he had known Christ, after the flesh, he knew him so no more: for by the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord, he was transported into another world, and had communion with him as an heavenly King, without low regards to the temporal privilege of conversing with him on earth. Our spiritual relation is more near and permanent

than the strictest band of nature; here we have all relation to the same heavenly Father, and unto Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, and head of our happy fraternity. The principal motives of love, even on earth, are the inherent excellencies of a person. Wisdom, holiness, goodness, fidelity, are mighty attractives to affection, and produce a more intimate confederacy of souls, than propinquity in nature, or any other carnal respects. Virtue is amiable in an old person, though wrinkled and deformed; and vice is hateful in a young person, though ever so beautiful. And you have seen on earth, my Epenetus, clearer eyes than those of flesh, a purer light than what is sensible, a diviner beauty than what is corporeal, and a nobler love than what is sensual; which made the royal prophet declare, That all his delight was in the excellent. But even spiritual love has its allays below; for there are relicks of frailty in the best of men there; and some blemishes that render them less amiable: but here the image of God is complete, by the union of all the glorious virtues requisite in its perfection; and every blessed soul agrees exactly with the first exemplar; a divine beauty shines in them ever durable; a beauty that darts no continuous fires; a beauty that is inviolable, and cannot suffer injury.

The true worth of the saints below is very little visible; the least part of it being seen. The earth is fruitful in its plants and flowers, but its riches are in mines of precious metals, and veins of marble, hidden in its bosom. True grace appears in sensible actions, but its glory is within; but here their glories are in open view; the glory of the blessed God is revealed in them. And ah! how attractive is the Divine Likeness to an holy eye! How doth it ravish me to see my fellow saints shining with an immortal loveliness! And their love is reciprocal,

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proportionable to the cause of it. An equal, constant flame is here preserved by pure materials: here every one is perfectly amiable, and perfectly enamoured with each other. And, O how happy is this state of love! Well might the psalmist break out into that rapture, Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! had he then seen that happy union which he now here enjoys with all the faithful ones. Love is the beauty and the strength of all societies, and the great pleasure of our lives below. How excellent, then, must be the joy of the blessed here, who witness the accomplishment of what our Saviour prayed for when on earth, That they may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. The blessed God is absolutely one, in his glorious nature and will, and therefore is unalterably happy; and the inviolable unity of the saint's love is a bright ray of the essential unity between the sacred persons: here love effectively transforms one soul into another, and makes the glory of each saint redound unto the joy of all. Such is the power of this celestial fire, where we burn, it melts and mixes souls in such an entire union, that, by complaisance and intimate joy, the blessedness of all is, as it were, proper to every one, and as if every one were placed in the hearts of all, and all in the heart of every one; and sure, where there is love like this, all needs must be delight. And how can it be otherwise, since, in this blessed society, there is a continual receiving and returning of love and joy, with the mutual reciprocations of endearment; and their conversation and intercourse is ravishing. Think, Epenetus, what an entertainment of love and joy there is in the presence and discourses of dear friends below; how their mutual aspect, like a chain composed of spirits, luminous

and active, fasten and draw their souls to one another: and though there be no friendship on the earth without alloys, yet the felicity of love consisteth in their conversations; but whatsoever is commendable in friendship, is in perfection here: and whatsoever is in alloy, occasioned by men's folly or their weakness, is all abolished here. The blessed here, with overflowing of affection, recount the divine benefits, and all those admirable methods, whereby the life of grace was first begun, preserved, and carried on amidst temptations; the succession of mercies in the time of our hopes, and the consummation of all in this time of our enjoyment. Have you not yet heard, Epenetus, the melody both saints and angels make about the throne? And how they all concur in their thanksgivings to God, for making of them reasonable creatures, such as are capable both of loving and enjoying him, when they might have been of the lowest order in the whole sphere of beings, for his compassionate care and providence over them in the world: but especially for his sovereign and singular mercy in electing them to be vessels of honour, and for his powerful grace in rescuing them from the cruel and ignominious bondage of sin: for his free love, that justified them from all their guilt, by the death of his only Son, and has now glorified them with himself? We are never weary, Epenetus, of this delightful exercise; but continually bless him for his mercy that endures for ever: yea, the winged cherubims and seraphims about the throne cry one to another to express their zeal and joy in celebrating his eternal purity and power, and the glory of his goodness. And O how unspeakable is the pleasure of this concert! every soul being harmonious, and contributing his part to the full musick of Heaven. O could the world below but hear the echo of those songs where-

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with the heavens above resound ! those songs where-
with the saints do here triumph in the just praise
and solemn adoration of the King of spirits : how
would it inflame their desire to be joined with them !

But besides the happiness that does here accrue
to us by the knowledge of our friends, kindred, and
relations, and that which does result from that com-
munion we have here with God, and with each other,
it is to me, my Epenetus, a mighty happiness I here
enjoy, in understanding satisfactorily all those deep
and obscure mysteries of religion which the profound-
est rabbies of the world below were not ashamed to
own they could not fully comprehend ; but, after all
the toil and industry of their most anxious inquiries,
were reduced to sit down with the great apostle,
[Rom. xi. 3,] in admiration of that depth, whose
bottom they can never fathom. And I acknowledge
that it is to me a mighty pleasure, that here I under-
stand those obscure passages of the sacred oracles,
which, notwithstanding all that bold criticks and
learned expositors have attempted to illustrate,
do to the world below remain so still : nor can it be
well otherwise, because they cannot discern how ex-
quisitely the several parts of sacred scripture are
fitted to the several times, persons and occurrences,
wherein their all-foreseeing Author intended most to
use them : all which are obvious to us here, and
consequently we discern a perfect harmony between
those texts that in the world below seemed most
at variance.

Here, Epenetus, we have clearly expounded to
us those riddles of Providence, which but too often
tempted even good men upon earth, to question
God's conduct in the government of the world ;
whilst the calamities and persecutions of virtue and
innocence seem approved by him who accumulates
prosperity on their criminal opposers. Here we are

thoroughly convinced, that all those seeming irregularities which the heathens thought fit to impute to the giddy whimsies of a female deity, are not only consistent with the Divine justice and goodness, but are productions of it. And though such a belief do, to intelligent persons in the world below, seem a great piece of self-denial, yet here it does appear as reasonable as there they find it difficult.

For Bildad, who was one of Job's well-meaning, but unkind comforters, has told us long ago, They that live upon earth are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because their days there are but a shadow. And the shortness of their transitory lives not permitting them to remain long enough there, to see above a scene or two of that great play acted by mankind on the stage of the world, it is no wonder that they are apt to harbour sinister thoughts of the contriver of a plot, neither the beginning nor end whereof they are acquainted with: but when once the whole of the Divine conduct, in the administration of things, shall be disclosed, as here it is, all those revolutions and occurrences of empires, states, families, and particular persons, which mortals are so prone to quarrel with below, do here to us appear so just, so requisite and seasonable, that those very things that while we were on earth tempted us to deny God, do here engage us to praise him. And, indeed, we are not so properly satisfied, as ravished, with the beauties of his providence.

But, Epenetus, besides this general providence of God, of whose adorable wisdom, in the conduct whereof, I have been speaking, we are here especially transported with wonder and gratitude at these discoveries of the Divine goodness, which he is pleased to make of the reasons of his dispensations towards each one in particular. O Epenetus, I have seen towards myself, not only the necessity and jus-

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tice, but even the mercifulness of those very afflictions that I once, (when upon earth,) imputed to his severity; and I am now fully convinced, no stroke I met with in the world below, (and you can tell, Epenetus, that there I met with many, as well as great afflictions,) either came sooner, or fell heavier, or stood longer, than the occasion that extorted it exacted: and I am satisfied my hopes were never disappointed, but to secure my title to better things than what I hoped for. Nor was my interest, (or what at least I thought then to be so,) ever prejudiced, but when it was more to the advantage of what was truly such. Yes, Epenetus, all that unwelcome darkness that on earth surrounded my purblind understanding, is now vanished, and did so at the first dawning of this bright eternal day, wherein the resolution of all those difficulties, which upon earth not only exercised but distressed my faith, is granted to reward it.

Here, Epenetus, to draw to a conclusion, we do not only converse with saints and angels, but with that far more infinitely glorious Deity who made them what they are, without at all impoverishing himself: here we not only enjoy Heaven, but its Maker, God; and see him as he is, who is our all in all: comprising all the goods we value in the creatures, more eminently and fully than the bright luminary of the day excels the twinkling tapers of the night: for we are here so taken up with the contemplation and fruition of that glorious object (in whose infinity all goods are both included and dilated,) that ages numberless, as are the joys of the beatifick vision doth abound with, will scarce afford us leisure for a diversion to any other pleasure than those itself creates; which are so numerous and so entire, that we desire nothing that we have not, except more tongues to sing more praises to the blessed God, or a capa-

city to pay him greater thanks for what we have: and even those desires does his gracious acceptance make, in being but conceived accomplished. For, otherwise, the residents of these bright mansions do scarce know any other want, than that of need to wish; the complete blessedness of our condition reducing us to a happy usefulness of wishes, by giving us so full a prepossession of all the objects of desire. Here time, like fire, having destroyed whatever it does prey on, does at last die itself, and so goes out into eternity. And here the nature of our joys is such, that though after some centuries of years they may seem to wax older, by having been enjoyed so many ages, yet do they really still continue as welcome and as fresh as at the first: it is the peculiar property of our felicity, that it always is the same, yet ever new. Weariness argues imperfection, either in the object, or the appetite; the former of which is impossible in God, and the latter ceases here.

For our felicity is here so great, there is no need of variety to be a part of it, or if it does admit variety, it is such a one as consists only in the further view of its first object, God; like that which may be seen on earth in the diversified refractions of the same sparkling diamond. In God there is, if I may properly so speak, such an identical variety, that the fruition of him both satisfies and creates desires; though that, without satiety—and this, without disquiet. Other delights do, like the clothes men usually wear, grow stale, and quickly are worn out. Whereas those heavenly pleasures we enjoy, participate of that prerogative of the garments of the Israelites in the wilderness, not impaired by being used long. But as the needle, once touched with the loadstone, would never uncompelled forsake it, but after ages cling no less closely to it than at the first moment of their union, so do the blessed

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here, with the same undiminished freshness, ever possess their joys, as if each moment was the first that they possessed them in. And if our happiness does not improve by our enjoyment of it, it is perhaps because the greatness of it does render it incapable of increasing: or if our pleasures do admit accession, they also do receive it, from the assurance that we shall taste them ever, and perpetually repeat the same renewed fruitions, to an eternity endeared by nothing more than by the quiet leisure it does afford us, undisturbedly to employ it in celebrating of Jehovah's praises; and in a condition happier, in that by it we are past doing, than past suffering ill.

In brief, our inexhausted joys are here so numberless, and so immense, that we shall need (as well as have,) eternity itself to taste them fully.

But I remember, Epenetus, you still are in the body, and may be tired with hearing what I could be for ever relating, so vast is the happiness that I possess, and so great pleasure is there in relating it. I shall now, therefore, only add one further property of our enjoyed happiness; and that is, That the vast multitude of blessed souls that are partakers of this joy and glory, does detract nothing from each private share, nor lessen the property each happy saint has in it in particular: this ocean of felicity being so bottomless, that the innumerable company of all the saints and angels never can exhaust it: nor is this strange at all, for in the world below, which does consist of many spacious countries, and many of them divided by large seas from one another, each several nation does alike enjoy the benefit of light; nor is there any can complain that they enjoy it less because another does enjoy it too, but all enjoy its benefit as fully as if none else enjoyed it but themselves. Indeed there is this

difference between the sun of righteousness and that which shines upon the world below; that whereas the latter by his presence eclipses all the planets, (his attendants,) the former, though radiant with a much greater splendour, will, by his presence, impart it to his saints; and so the great apostle of the Gentiles does inform you, where he says, When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear also with him in glory.

It is the language of each blessed soul to his Redeemer, I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; for each have a peculiar claim upon him. And David (who, when he lived on earth, was so well skilled in singing songs of praise to the Redeemer,) says of all them that put their trust in God, That he shall abundantly satisfy them with the fatness of his house, and make them drink of the river of his pleasure: as if he meant to insinuate, that as when a multitude of persons drink of the same river, none of them are able to exhaust it, and yet each of them has the full liberty of drinking as much as he can, or as much as he could, though none but himself should be allowed to drink of it; so whosoever enjoys God, enjoys him wholly, or at least enjoys him so entirely in relation to his capacity, that the fruition of whatsoever rests unenjoyed in God is forbidden by the immensity of the object, and not the prepossession of his rivals.

Thus, Epenetus, I have given you a brief account of our celestial Canaan: it is not, indeed, the thousandth part of that which might be said, yet it is enough to let you see it is a land flowing with milk and honey; and may well enough serve to whet your longing for a more fruitive experimental knowledge of it; for none can fully know the happiness we here enjoy until they come to be partakers of it.

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Epen. Junius having finished his excellent discourse, I returned him many thanks, assuring him, that I was so far from being tired with hearing it, that I was exceedingly delighted, as well as informed by it; and that I could not but be much pleased in hearing a description of that happiness, which, through the great superabounding merits of my blessed Redeemer, I hope in a short time to be partaker of.

Jun. To wait with faith and patience, replied the happy Junius, until your mortal body be laid down, is what is now your work; and then you will know far more than I have told you. You will hear, and see, and know things then after another rate, than now you do. Your ears are not fitted now to hear those melodies that saints and angels make before the throne, nor can your tongue repeat those songs of praise which here the blessed make continually. Your eyes (though strengthened above those of other mortals,) cannot yet behold the brightness of the glory that fills this happy place: though I must grant what you have seen has given you more suitable ideas of it than all that dwell below can make of heavenly things; which is a favour so great and inexpressible, that you have mighty cause to magnify his great exceeding grace, through whose abundant goodness you were admitted hither.

Epen. The blessed work, said I, I never can begin too soon; and it is a work I hope will never end, but be as lasting as the cause of it. But, Junius, since I have had the happiness of this conversation with you, may I not also see my mother here? For I am sure she is among the blessed. She early did instruct me in the things of God, and caused me every day to read the holy scriptures; her pious exhortations, first of all, made me look after heavenly and eternal things; and on her dying bed gave

me charge, (whatever others did,) to serve the Lord. She, I am sure, would much rejoice to see me in this place.

Jun. Your mother, Epenetus, is here, indeed; and will, no doubt, exult and joy in God on your account, as she continually does on her own; but in this happy place, worldly relations cease. Nor is there male and female here, but all are alike the angels; for souls cannot be distinguished into sexes; and therefore all relations here are swallowed up in God: however, she whom you called mother in the world below, you shall see presently.

He had no sooner spoke, but, taking me by the hand, far swifter than an arrow from a bow we passed by several shining forms, clothed in the robes of immortality, who seemed to wonder at me as I passed them; which, I thought, was occasioned by my being there in the poor rags of frail mortality. But Junius having brought me to my mother, for so I thought her, though then I saw a shining form, said to me—

Jun. Farewell, my Epenetus! I have now done what you desired me: your guardian angel will be with you straight, and reconduct you to the world below; where, when you come, remember that you do not cease to celebrate the mighty wonders of Divine Love, who hath so far indulged your weakness as to admit you hither, and with corporeal eyes to see the immaterial glories of the blessed.

Epen. The noble Junius having left me, I straight drew near the shining form that stood before me, who, compassed round with rays of dazzling lustre, appeared extremely glorious. I hardly could behold her for the exceeding brightness of her countenance, or else it seemed to me so, because I looked with more intenseness on her than on Elijah, or the noble Junius: but taking it for granted it was my mo-

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ther, I thus addressed her: My dearest mother, I joy to see you clothed in that bright robe of glory, as an inhabitant of these blessed realms of light and immortality.

Mother. Dear Epenetus, (said my mother to me,) for what I am, to him that is on the throne, and to the Lamb, be all the praise and glory; for he alone it is has made me so. — The robe of glory, which you see me wear, is only the reflection of his own bright beams! — Ah, Epenetus! had not the blessed, for ever blessed, redeeming Jesus, first clothed me with his robe of righteousness, I never should have worn this robe of glory. I do not ask you, Epenetus, (she continued,) how you came thus to be admitted here; for I have had already, from Elijah, a full account of that: and must acknowledge the Divine condescension has been exceedingly great in this permission; for which eternal praise be given to him. Ah, Epenetus! through how many dangers does Divine grace conduct us to glory! I cannot think, but with the most admiring thoughts of Divine love, how near I once was to eternal ruin! I once was poor, and blind, and naked; cast out unto the loathing of my own person, and lay polluted in my filth and blood. But O the abundant grace that found me in that wretched, sad condition, and yet to me made it a time of love, washed me from all my filthiness, and purged me from my sin! I once was nothing else but darkness; but, O miraculous and happy change! I am now full of light, and love, and joy: I once was poor and miserable, but now I am enriched with all that Heaven can give, or I receive: I once was naked and exposed to shame, but now I am adorned with robes of light and glory: I once was under sentence of eternal separation from the Divine presence, but now I am possessed of God, my only life, and joy, and supreme good. O how

transporting is the comparison of these so wide and contrary extremes! And O how pleasant is the bright day of eternity, after a night so dark and so tempestuous! How does a vivid sense of those past evils produce a far more lively feeling and fruition of my happiness! This makes the everlasting hallelujahs that I sing to my victorious Deliverer, more ravishing, and more harmonious.

Epen. I must confess I was amazed to find my mother in such an ecstasy and holy transport; and could not forbear saying, Ah, my dear mother! you speak like one that is indeed in Heaven, and feel the mighty joys you are possessed of.

Moth. O Epenetus! (she replied again,) you should not think this strange. The mighty wonders of divine love and grace will be the subject of our song for ever. Nor should you call me mother here, although I once was so; for here all such relations cease, and are all swallowed up in God, who is alone the great Father of all this heavenly family: and I must tell you, Epenetus, you are far more dear to me, as you are one that love and fear the Lord, and so through faith are his adopted son, than as you are the son of my body. It is here a greater mercy, that we have God the fountain of our happiness; and that all we enjoy is in and through him, who is an object that is every way so adequate to our most enlarged capacities, that, in enjoying him, we enjoy all that we can ask or think.

Epen. I then desired to know if I should tell her in what condition I left my father and my brethren in the world below, when I was carried thither.

Moth. To this she answered, No; since I have put the body off, I have with that too put off all relations in the flesh: here God (said she,) is all in all unto me; I have no husband but the blessed bridegroom of my soul; he who is fairer than the chil-

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dren of men; who is alone desirable to me: nor have I here any relations else. We are all children of one Father here, and servants of one Master, whose blessed service is our perfect freedom: and as for those I left behind me in the world below, I have committed them to God, in whose good pleasure I am happy, whatsoever it be. I shall be glad, and heartily rejoice, to see them all heirs of this blessed inheritance; for then I shall be well assured the will of God is so. But if they should close in with the grand enemy of their salvation, and refuse the grace that is offered them, and thereby perish in their unbelief, God will be glorified in his justice, and in his glory I shall ever rejoice. But since, dear Epene-tus, you must descend again into the world below, you cannot better show your love to God, and zeal for the promotion of his glory, than by endeavouring to turn them from the ways of unrighteousness: nor do you know but that might be one end why this peculiar privilege has been allowed you.

Whilst I was discoursing with my mother, a numerous company passed before me, clothed in long robes, white as the morning brightness, and purer far than any thing that ever yet deserved that name, all having crowns of glory on their heads, which sparkled forth in refulgent lustre, and each one carrying in his right hand a palm of victory; and as they passed by I heard them say, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb! And another company, who had a very glorious appearance, and covered their faces with their wings, whom I took to be angels, answered them, saying, Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

I then enquired what the great company were that were arrayed in garments of so pure a white,

with palms of victory in their hands: and I was told they were the noble company of martyrs, who, having endured great tribulations in the world, and laid down their lives for the word of God, and the testimony which they held, had now their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, and had palms in their hands in token of victory. I then asked from whence they came; and I was answered, they came from under the altar, where they had been crying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth!

Epen. I thought that all the saints here had that rest, and peace, and joy in God, which did not permit them to have any thoughts of revenge towards their fellow creatures: and I was the more inclined to think so, because many of them had prayed for their persecutors in the world below, even at the very stakes, and when they have been under the hands of the executioners; and it seems strange to me that that meek and forgiving spirit should be altered here in Heaven.

Moth. The saints here do, indeed, possess that rest, and peace, and joy in God, which is the sum of all their happiness; but having resigned themselves entirely to the divine good pleasure, they cannot but desire God's will may be fulfilled in all respects; and, therefore, knowing that it is the will of God to render tribulation to them that have troubled them, and that he does design to glorify himself, by bringing down his judgements on the anti-christian whore, who hath made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus, they cannot but desire the will of God may be done, and that his name may be glorified; which they know will be the result of his executing judgement upon the great whore: for, when Babylon is fallen,

a new song shall be put into their mouths; and then it shall be said, Rejoice over her, thou Heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets! for God hath avenged you of her. Yea, then shall they sing, Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God! for true and righteous are his judgements; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and having avenged the blood of his servants at her hands; and therefore, praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear his name, both small and great! - And again they sing, hallelujah. So that their crying under the altar, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth, is not out of any desire of revenge, but that God may be glorified for his righteous judgements.

Epen. Having declared my satisfaction in her answer, I desired to know whether the souls of the blessed understood what affairs were transacting in the world below, and whether they had any concern therein.

Moth. To this she replied, The sum of all our knowledge here is to know God, the fountain of our happiness; but as to the affairs of particular persons, we are not concerned with them, and are ignorant of them, being still finite, though glorified creatures: and being present in all places is an attribute peculiar to God alone, to whose sight every creature is manifest. Though the prosperity or adversity of the church below, in their militant, is represented to us by the angels, who are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those that shall be heirs of salvation; and from what we learn from them we are excited to renew our praises to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever. The admirable providence of God, in the deliverance and preserva-

tion of his church, being what we reflect upon with the greatest pleasure and delight, and praise God for with the greatest ardency of affection, desiring also that his glory and his people's happiness, may be consummate by the redemption of the whole church, which shall not be till the bride hath made herself ready, and the mystical body of Christ be completed.

Epen. I then told her I would only ask her one thing more, (for I believed my conductor was ready to come for me,) and that was, in what manner their time was spent in this blessed place, and what their general conversation with each other was?

Moth. To this she replied, O my Epenetus! how much does that cloud of mortality you still bear about you, clog your understanding even in these bright regions! You speak of us as still clothed with mortal flesh, and consider not that here mortality is swallowed up in life, and time is changed into eternity, without succession or end. It is true, indeed, that in the world below there is a continual flux of time, which is divided into hours, and days, and weeks, and months, and years; but here there is no such thing; here is no night by which days are distinguished, nor circling orbs that make the several seasons of the year; but one eternal undivided point lasts here for ever; and therefore, Epenetus, here is no time to spend.

But then, as to the other part of your question, What our general conversation with each other is? Eternity can only fully answer it. We all have work enough to do throughout the numerous ages of eternity, and that so very pleasant and delightful, it both creates our joy and still increases it: what is there more delightful to the soul than knowledge! And you may then soon think how vast a field we have to trace in it. And as our knowledge does increase,

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so do the adorations we pay to the Divine Author of it: for this is our peculiar happiness, that all our disquisitions here, of whatsoever kind, tend to illustrate the high praise and adoration of the ineffable Three-One.

How many wonders of the Deity, my Epenetus, do shine forth in the works of nature in the world below, which still lie hid and undiscovered unto the most elaborate inquiries into them! How many things are there below, you know not how they are done, and yet are well assured that they are! Who can tell how a tree grows from a seed, or a variegated, curious flower from a poor simple slip, without any diversity? And yet, that so it does is evident enough.

Why the magnetick stone attracts the needle, or amber picks up straws, are some of the arcanes of nature which yet puzzle the wisest of mortals to tell by what secret sympathies it came to pass, although the matter of fact be very obvious. These things are made intelligible here, and all their occult causes laid open to our view: which likewise does excite our humble adorations and renewed praises to him who is so excellent in working.

And then, again, the wondrous magnitude, as well as contextures, of the celestial orbs, (which vain astrologers in vain pretend to penetrate,) are here, both in their causes and effects, made known unto the blessed, who, being filled with highest admiration, adore the ever blessed God, for all his works of wonder.

Not that we have this knowledge barely by a simple intuition, but by the mutual exercise of our discursive faculties, whereby our knowledge still becomes progressive. Nor do I deny, but that, by tuition, our here enlarged faculties receive a great addition; for here we at one view can behold more

than we can do successively below for many years; to which the swiftness of our motion does also much contribute.

But farther yet, the works of God's almighty providence, and with that wondrous wisdom he has overruled and governed all events, is such a theme as well becomes us here to be continually contemplating; and which, the more we view, the more we find occasion still to magnify the great and glorious name of the great Author of our happiness. These contemplations, Epenetus, have often been exceedingly delightful to me, when in the world below, where I saw things but very darkly, and lost much of the beauty of them, by reason of the vanity which was upon my purblind understanding, by means of which, I could not see afar off: but now, that all my intellectual faculties are both enlarged and perfected, and I can see the whole of what I then had but an imperfect view of: how much more pleasant and delightful must it be? How much more must it magnify the wisdom of the great contriver, to see men eager in the prosecution of their own designs and the fulfilling of their lusts, not having a regard to any thing besides the satisfying of themselves: and yet to see how all these things are overruled to the effecting of the Divine good pleasure, although those instruments knew nothing of it, is indeed well befitting him who is so wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working: to whom be glory, and blessing, and praise, through all the endless ages of eternity.

Thus the eternal Father had decreed our great Redeemer should be born in Bethlehem, for so the prophet Micah had declared, saying. But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, who is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from ever-

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lasting. But when the time drew near he should be born, the blessed virgin lived at Nazareth, with her espoused husband, Joseph, designing nothing else but to lie in there; which would have contradicted what the prophet Micah, by divine inspiration, had long ago foretold; and therefore, at this time, Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperour, puts out a decree, that all the empire should be taxed, and each one in his own city from whence he descended, and that both men and women. This caused the blessed virgin and her espoused husband to go to Bethlehem, (big as she was, and far as was the way,) that they might there be taxed according to what Cæsar had decreed; and there the Lord of life must then be born, according to what Micah prophesied.

Cæsar aimed only at his getting money; and yet that aim of his, through the Divine wisdom overruling it, was made a means to bring about the fulfilling of the prophecy in so important a matter as the birth of the Messiah. This tends exceedingly to magnify the mighty wisdom and overruling providence of God, who governs all events to his own glory, and his people's good.

You knew a person, Epenetus, in the world below, who, having proposed to go and see a friend, and stay at his house some days, fell down, as he was getting upon horseback, and broke his leg, which put a stop to his intended journey; this he esteemed a very great affliction; but in a few days after, he received intelligence that his friend's house was casually burnt that very night that he intended to have lain there, and all the people in it. This made him look on that which he at first thought to be an affliction, to be a mercy to him; and that the breaking of his leg was but in order to the saving of his life. Many such instances of Divine love and goodness

might be given, which here the blessed retain a lively sense of, and mention in their songs of praise and hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb.

Again, my Epenetus, here all the blessed are eternally employed in singing praises to him, who, by his wondrous grace has brought them to his glory. Here we see plainly that gulf of everlasting ruin, in which we were so like to plunge ourselves, had he not stopped our way. He often hedged up our way with thorns, that so we might not travel to destruction. The various methods of his grace, whereby he brought us to himself, we here repeat to one another, and join in one great chorus to his praise: and whilst we praise him thus, he streams forth emanations of his grace upon us, whereby we are assimilated more into his likeness, which is our highest happiness.

Thus, Epenetus, I have answered your last question, which you will better understand when you shall come to be clothed with immortality. In the meantime, walk worthy of the grace you have received; and let not your attainments puff you up, but give to God the glory of his grace; and let what you have seen and heard have this effect, to make you so much more abhor yourself for your own vileness. The great apostle of the Gentiles, who like yourself was once admitted hither, declares he soon met with a thorn in the flesh, lest he should else have been puffed up too much for the abundant revelations that he had received. Let this example, therefore, keep you humble: humility will be your best defence; such God exalts, whilst he the proud depresses. I see your guardian angel is coming towards you, and therefore, Epenetus, fare-you-well, till next you come, and then we will part no more.

Epen. She had no sooner spoken, but she departed, and the bright form that brought me from the

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world below, into this place of happiness, was present with me; to whom, as I was bowing—

Ang. Bow to the throne, (said he,) and not to me; I have already told you I am thy fellow creature; and therefore worship God alone, for he alone is worthy of adoration. Hast thou observed these heavenly mansions well?

Epen. I then replied, I have observed, and have been almost ravished with their glory; but even here I could but see in part; their splendour was too bright, and too diaphanous for my beholding. And yet the sight was so extremely delightful, that I could wish I might stay here for ever.

Ang. I have, replied the angel, a commission to reconduct you to the world below; not only to the earth from whence I took you, but to the regions of the prince of darkness, that thou mayest there see the reward of sin, and what incensed justice has prepared, as the just judgement of their rebellion, who would exalt themselves above the throne of the Most High. But do not therefore be afraid; for, as I have a commission to bring thee thither, so have I likewise to bring thee back again, and leave thee in the world from whence I took thee, till thou hast there put off mortality; and then I shall once more be thy conductor hither, where thou shalt live for ever with all the blessed here.

Epen. These last words of the angel did, as it were, put new life into me: for to leave Heaven for earth, was that which did extremely discompose me, and would have rendered me inconsolable, but that I knew the Divine will was such. But to leave Heaven for Hell, was that which turned my very heart within me. However, when I knew that it was the Divine good pleasure that I should be returned from thence to the earth again, and there put off mortality, and then be reconducted up to Heaven, I was a

little comforted, and found within myself an entire resignation to the will of God; and therefore said with some assurance to my bright conductor, That which the blessed God has ordered, I shall be always willing to obey, of whose great mercy I have already had so very large experience,

That even in Hell itself I will not fear,
May I but have his presence with me there.

Ang. To this my shining guardian answered me, Wherever the blessed God vouchsafes his presence, there is Heaven, and whilst we are in Hell, he will be with us.

Epen. Then bowing low before the Almighty's throne, swifter than thought my guardian angel carried me ten thousand leagues below the imperial heavens, where, when I saw those mighty globes of fire, those ever burning lamps of the ethereal heavens, I thus bespoke my bright conductor: That I had heard, when I was upon earth, that each one of these fixed stars were worlds; and I believed they might; because, though here they are of such a mighty magnitude, they seem to us on earth just such small things as what the earth seems here, although, indeed, the earth seems here more dark than they do unto those that are on earth. But having such an opportunity, I would willingly be informed from you what truth there is therein.

Ang. To this my shining guardian answered me, To him who is Almighty, there is nothing impossible; nor can there be a bound set to infinity. The ever-blessed God took six days time to make the world below, but could as well have made it in one moment, if he had so determined; it was the putting forth of his Almighty power that did effect it; and what that power can do, there is none can tell but he that does possess it. But from his power, to argue it is his will, is no good logick in the school

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of Heaven. He does whatever he pleases, both in Heaven above, and in the earth below; and what he pleases to reveal to us, we know; and what he has not so revealed, are secrets locked up in his own eternal counsel, which it is a bold and presumptuous curiosity for any creature to inquire into. There is no doubt but he can make as many worlds as there are stars in Heaven, if it pleases him; but that he has done so, he has not yet revealed, nor is it therefore our duty to inquire.

By this time we were come down to the lowest regions of the air, where I saw multitudes of horrid forms, and dismal dark appearances, fly from the shining presence of my bright conductor.

Epen. These, sure, said I, are some of the vanguard of Hell, so black and so affrighting are their forms.

Ang. These are, said my conductor, some of the apostate spirits, that wander up and down in the air, and on the earth, like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour; and though they are fled hence, you will see them quickly in their own dark territories; for we are now upon the borders of the infernal pit.

VISIONS OF HELL,

AND OF THE TORMENTS OF THE DAMNED.

I QUICKLY found the words of my conductor very true; for we were soon surrounded with a darkness much more black than night, which was attended with a stink more suffocating far than that of burning brimstone; my ears were likewise filled with the horrid yellings of the damned spirits, that all the most discordant notes on earth were, in comparison of this, melodious musick.

Ang. Now, said my guardian angel, you are on the verge of Hell; but do not fear the power of the destroyer, for my commission from the imperial throne secures you from all dangers: here you may hear from devils and damned souls, the cursed causes of their endless ruin; and what you have a mind to ask, inquire, and they shall answer you: the devils cannot hurt you, though they would, for they are bound by him that has commissioned me, of which themselves are sensible, which makes them rage, and fret, and roar, and bite their hated chains, but all in vain.

We now were come within Hell's territories, placed in the caverns of the infernal deep; there, where earth's centre reconciles all things, where all effects do in their causes sleep; there in a sulphureous lake of liquid fire, bound with the adamantine chain of Heaven's fixed decree, sat Lucifer, upon a burning throne; his horrid eyes sparkling with hellish fury, as full of rage as his strong pains could make him. Those wandering fiends, that, as we came from Heaven, fled before us, had, I perceived, given notice of our coming, which had put all Hell in an uproar, and thus made Lucifer to vent his horrid blasphemies against the blessed God; which he delivered with such an air of arrogance and pride, as plainly shows he only wanted power, but neither rage nor malice.

Lucifer. What would the thunderer have? said he. He has my Heaven already, whose radiant sceptre this bold hand should bear, and for those never fading fields of light, my fair inheritance, confines me here in this dark house of death, sorrow and woe! What! would he have Hell from me too, that he insults me here? Ah! could I but obtain another day to try it in, I would make Heaven shake, and his bright throne to totter. Nor would I fear

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the utmost of his power, though he had fiercer flames than these to throw me in. Though then I lost the day, the fault was not mine: no winged spirit in Heaven's arched roof bid fairer for the victory than I did. But ah! (continued he, with a changed voice,) that day is lost, and I am doomed, for ever doomed, to these dark territories! But it is at least some comfort to me still, that mankind's sorrow waits upon my woe. And since I cannot on the thunderer, I will wreak the utmost of my rage on them.

Epen. I was amazed to hear his impious speech, and could not forbear saying to my conductor, How justly are his blasphemies rewarded.

Ang. What you have heard from this apostate spirit, is both his sin and punishment; for every blasphemy he belches against Heaven, makes Hell the hotter to him.

We then passed on further, amongst dismal scenes of unmixed sorrow, and saw two wretched souls tormented with a fiend, who, without ceasing, plunged them in liquid fire and burning brimstone, whilst they at the same time accused and cursed each other, one of them saying to his tormented sufferer, O cursed be thy face, that ever I set eyes upon thee! My misery is long of thee; I may thank thee for this, for it was thy persuasions brought me hither; thou didst entice me; thou it was that didst ensnare me thus. It was your covetousness and cheating, and your oppression and grinding of the poor, that brought me hither. If you had but set me a good example, as you did an ill one, I might, for aught I know, have been in Heaven, and there have been as happy as I am now miserable: but, O wretch that I was! my following your steps has made me in this wretched state, and ruined me for ever! O that I had never seen thy face, or thou hadst never been born to do my soul the wrong that you have done.

The other wretch replied, and may I not as well blame you? For do you not remember how at such a time and place you did entice me, and drew me out, and asked me if I would not go along with you, when I was about my other business, about my lawful calling? But you called me away, and therefore are as much in fault as I: though I was covetous, yet you were proud; and if you learned of me your covetousness, I am sure I learned from you my pride and drunkenness; and though you learned of me to cheat, you learned me to whore, to lie, and scoff at goodness. Thus, though I stumbled you in some things, you stumbled me as much in others; and therefore if you blame me, I can blame you as much. And if I have to answer for some of your most filthy actions, you have still to answer for some of mine: I wish you never had come hither; the very looks of you do wound my soul, by bringing sin afresh into my mind: it was with you, with you it was I sinned. O grief unto my soul! And since I could not shun thy company there, O that I could have been without it here.

From this sad dialogue I soon perceived, that those who are companions upon earth in sin, shall be so too in Hell in punishment. And though on earth they love each other's company, they will not care for it in Hell. This, I believe, was the true reason why Dives seemed so charitable to his brethren, that he would have them warned, that so they might not come into this place of torment; it was love unto himself, and not to them, that was his motive; because had they come thither, his torments would have thereby been increased.

But there were yet more tragick scenes of sorrow; for, leaving those two accursed wretches accusing each other, for being authors of each other's misery, we passed on further, beholding several wo-

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ful spectacles; and, among others, one who still had flaming sulphur forced down her throat by a tormenting spirit, which he did with that horrid cruelty and insolence, I could not but say to him:

Epen. Why should you so delight in the tormenting of that accursed wretch, as to be thus perpetually pouring that flaming and infernal liquor down her throat?

Fiend. This is no more but a just retribution, replied the fiend: this woman, in her life-time, was such a sordid wretch, that, though she had gold enough, could never be satisfied, and therefore now I pour it down her throat. She cared not whom she ruined and undid, so she could get their gold; and when she had amassed together a greater treasure than ever she could spend, her love of money would not let her spend so much of it as to supply herself with what the common necessities of life required; for she then went often with an empty belly, though her bags were full, or else she filled it at another's charge: and as for her apparel, it either never grew old, or if it were so, it was always so supplied with patches, that at last it was hard to say which piece was original, as it is among the learned men on earth to find out the original of the Nile. She kept no house, because she would not be taxed; nor keep her treasure in her hands, for fear she should be robbed; nor let it out without good bonds and mortgages, for fear of being cheated; although she ever cheated all she could, and was herself so great a cheat, she cheated her own body of its food, and her own soul of mercy. And yet this cursed wretch had but one child in all the world to give it to, whom she had brought up so, she knew no more how to make use of it than her mother did. Since gold, then, was her God on earth, is it not just that she should have her belly full in Hell?

Epen. When her tormentor had done speaking, I asked her whether what he said were true or not? To this she answered me, No; to my grief it is not. How! to your grief? said I. Yes, to my grief, said she; because, were that which my tormentor tells you, true, I should be better satisfied: he tells you, that it is gold that he pours down my throat; but he is a lying devil, and speaks falsely; were it but gold, I never should complain; but he abuses me, and in the stead of gold, he only gives me horrid stinking sulphur; had I my gold, I should be happy still—which I so truly value, that if I had it here, I scarce would bribe Heaven with it, to be removed from hence.

I could not forbear telling my conductor, I was amazed to hear a wretch, in Hell itself, so to doat upon her riches, and that too whilst in the tormentor's hands.

Ang. This may convince you, (said he,) it is sin that is the greatest of all evils; and where love of that prevails, that soul is lost for ever: and therefore it is the greatest of all punishments to be abandoned to the love of sin. The love of gold, (to which this cursed creature is given up,) is a more exquisite and fatal punishment, than that which the apostate spirits here inflict upon her.

Epen. Oh! (said I,) could but wicked men on earth, for one small moment lay their ears to this mouth of Tophet, and hear these horrid shrieks of damned souls, they could not be in love with sin again.

Ang. Eternal truth has told us otherwise: for those that will not fear his ministers, nor have regard to what his word contains, will not be warned, though one should come from Hell.

We had not come much further, before we saw a wretched soul lie on a bed of burning steel, al-

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most choked with brimstone; who cried out, as one under a dreadful anguish, with a note of description, which made me desire of my conductor to stay awhile, that I might listen more attentively to what he said; and thereupon I heard him speak as follows:

Soul. Ah! miserable wretch! Undone for ever! O these killing words, *for ever!* Will not a thousand years suffice, to bear that pain, which, if I could avoid it, I would not bear one moment for a thousand worlds. No, no, my misery will never have an end: after the thousand thousand years, it will be *for ever* still. O hapless, helpless, hopeless state indeed! It is this *for ever* is the hell of Hell! O cursed wretch! Cursed to all eternity! How wilfully have I undone myself! O what stupendous folly am I guilty of, to choose sin's short and momentary pleasure, at the dear rate of everlasting pain! How oft have I been told it would be so! How often pressed to leave those paths of sin, that would be sure to bring me to the chambers of eternal death! But I, like the deaf adder, lent not an ear unto those charmers, though they charmed so wisely. They told me often, that my short-lived pleasures would quickly issue in eternal pain; and now too sad experience tells me so—it tells me so, *indeed*, but it is too late to help it, for my eternal state is fixed for ever. Why had I reason given me! Why was I made with an immortal soul, and yet should take so little care of it! O how my own neglect stings me to death, and yet I know I cannot, I must not die, but live a dying life, worse than ten thousand deaths. And yet I might once have helped all this, and would not! O, that is the gnawing worm that never dies! I might have once been happy: salvation once was offered me, and I refused it. Ah! had it been but once, yet to refuse it, had been a folly not to be forgiven; but it was offered me a thousand times, and

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yet, (wretch that I was!) I still as often refused it. O cursed sin! that witch deluding pleasure bewitches mankind to eternal ruin! God often called, but I as often refused; he stretched his hand out, but I would not mind it. How often have I set at nought his counsel! How often have I refused his reproof! But now the scene is changed, the case is altered: for now he laughs at my calamity, and mocks at that destruction which is come upon me. He would have helped me once, but then I would not, and therefore those eternal miseries I am condemned to undergo, are but the just reward of my own doing.

Epen. I could not hear this doleful lamentation, without reflecting on the wondrous grace the ever-blessed God had shown to me—eternal praise to his holy name! For my heart told me, that I had deserved, as much as that sad wretch, to be the object of eternal wrath; and it is his grace alone had made us differ!

O how unsearchable his counsels be!

And who can fathom his Divine decree!

After these reflections, I addressed myself to the doleful complainer, and told him, I had heard his woeful lamentation, by which I perceived his misery was great, and his loss irreparable; and told him I would willingly be informed of it more particularly, which might possibly be some alleviation of his sufferings.

Soul. No, not at all. My pains are such as can admit of no relief—no, not for one small moment. But by the question you have asked, I do perceive you are a stranger here: and may you ever be so. Ah! had I but the least hopes still remaining, how would I kneel and cry, and pray for ever, to be redeemed from hence! But ah! it is all in vain: I am lost for ever.

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Though, that you may beware of coming hither, I will tell you what the damned suffer here. Our miseries, in this infernal dungeon, are of two sorts: what we have lost, and what we undergo. And these I will reduce, each to their several heads, although the sad relation will give a greater sting to what I feel.

First, then, for what we have lost: In this dark abode of misery and sorrow, we have lost the presence of the ever blessed God, and this is that which makes this dungeon, Hell. Though we had lost a thousand worlds, it would not be so much as this one loss. Could but the least glimpse of his favour enter here, we might be happy, but we have lost it to our everlasting woe.

2. Here we have likewise lost the company of saints and angels, and in their room have nothing but tormenting devils.

3. Here we have lost Heaven, too, the seat of blessedness: there is a deep gulph betwixt us and Heaven, so that we are shut out from thence for ever. Those everlasting gates that let the blessed into happiness, are now for ever shut against us here.

4. Here we have also lost all pity, and this is to the miserable a great loss. To have that God, who does so pity sinners, that he has given his beloved Son to die for them, to be so far from pitying us, that he rejoices in our misery, and will do so for ever, is that which stings us to the very heart, and makes our misery beyond measure miserable. And what can be more cruel and tormenting, than to have that Redeemer, that gives his very blood for others, deny to pity us? Nor will the saints and angels pity us: but whilst we here are howling in our misery, under the wrath of an incensed God, the saints too rejoice that we are damned, and God is glorified in our destruction. Behold the dismal issue of our sin!

5. To make our wretchedness yet far more wretched, we have lost the hope of ever being in a better state; which renders our condition truly hopeless. He that upon earth is the most miserable, has yet hope left as a reserve. And, therefore, it is a common proverb there, That were it not for hope, the heart would break. Well may our hearts break then, since we are here both without hope and help. This is what we have lost, which, but to think on, is enough to tear, and rend, and gnaw upon our miserable souls for ever. Yet, O that this were all! But we have sense of pain as well as loss: and having showed you what we have lost, I am now to show you what we undergo.

1. And first, We undergo a variety of torments: we are tormented here a thousand, nay, ten thousand several ways. They that are most afflicted upon earth, have seldom any more than one distemper at a time: but should they have the plague, the gout, the stone, and fever at a time, how miserable would they think themselves! Yet all those are but like the biting of a flea, to those intolerable pungent pains that we endure. Here we have all the loathed variety of Hell to grapple with: here is fire that is unquenchable to burn us with; a lake of burning brimstone ever choking us; eternal chains to tie us; here is utter darkness to affright us, and a worm of conscience, that gnaws upon us everlastingly: and any one of these is worse to bear, than all the torments mankind ever felt on earth.

2. But as our torments here are various, so are they universal too; afflicting each part of the body, and tormenting all the powers of the soul: which renders what we suffer most insufferable. In those distempers you men are seized with on earth, though some parts are afflicted, other parts are free: al-

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though your body may be out of order, your head may yet be well; and although your head be ill, your vitals may be free; or though your vitals be affected, your arms and legs may still be clear. But here it is otherwise: each member of the soul and body is at once tormented.

The eye is here tormented with the sight of devils, who do appear in all the horrid shapes, and black appearances that sin can give them. The ear is continually tormented with the loud yellings and continual outcries of the damned; the nostrils smothered with sulphureous flames, the tongue with burning blisters; and the whole body rolled in flames of liquid fire. And all the powers and faculties of our souls are here tormented: the imagination, with the thoughts of present pain; the memory lost with reflecting on what a Heaven we have lost, and of those opportunities we had of being saved. Our minds are here tormented with considering how vainly we have spent our precious time, and how we have abused it. Our understanding is tormented in the thoughts of our past pleasures, present pains, and future sorrows, which are to last for ever. And our consciences are tormented with a continual gnawing worm.

3. Another thing that makes our misery insupportable, is the extremity of our torments. The fire that burns us is so violent, that all the water in the sea can never quench it; the pains we suffer here are so extreme, that it is impossible they should be known by any one but those that feel them. Vindictive justice here displays its power in the sustaining of our dying lives, under those great and excruciating pains, which scarce an angel's strength could undergo.

4. Another of the sad ingredients of our misery, is the continuity of our torments, as various and as

universal, and as extremely violent as they are, they are continual too; nor have the least intermission from them; our miseries are both extreme, and always so. If there were any relaxation, it might be some allay: but this makes our condition so deplorable, that there is no intermission of our torments, but what we suffer now we must for ever suffer. This causes a hatred to arise in our minds against God; and our hatred against God continues our miseries upon us.

5. The society or company we have here, is another ingredient in our misery. Tormenting devils and tormented souls are all our company: and dreadful shrieks and howlings, under the fierceness of our pain, and fearful execrations against Him whose power and justice keeps us here, is all our conversation. And here the torments of our fellow-sufferers are so far from mitigating our misery, that they increase our pain.

6. The place in which we suffer is another thing that increases our sufferings: it is the abstract of all misery—a prison, a dungeon, a bottomless pit, a lake of fire and brimstone, a furnace of fire that burns to eternity, the blackness of darkness for ever, and, lastly, Hell itself. And such a wretched place as this must needs increase our wretchedness.

7. The cruelty of our tormentors, is another thing that adds to our torments. Our tormentors are devils, in whom there is no pity; but being tormented themselves, do yet take pleasure in tormenting us.

8. All those particulars that I have reckoned up, are very grievous; but that which makes them much more grievous is, that they shall ever be so; that all our most intolerable sufferings shall last to all eternity. O wretched state of men! to be the everlasting objects of God's revenging justice. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, is that which is

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perpetually sounding in my ears. O that I could reverse that fatal sentence! O that there was but a bare possibility of doing it! What is it that I would not do or suffer to effect it? And yet, Almighty power can inflict no more than what I suffer now. But that I shall for ever suffer it, is what I know not how to bear, and yet what I must ever undergo. Thus have I showed you the miserable case that we are in, and shall be in for ever.

This wretched soul had scarcely made an end of what he was saying, before he was afresh tormented by a hellish fury, who bade him cease complaining, for it was in vain; besides, said he, do not you know you have deserved it all? How often were you told of this before, but would not then believe it? You laughed at them that told you of a Hell: nay, you were so presumptuous, as to dare Almighty justice to destroy you! How often have you called on God to damn you? And do you now complain that you are answered according to your wishes? What an unreasonable thing is this, that you should call so often for damnation, and yet be so uneasy under it? You own yourself, you had salvation offered you, and you refused it. With what face, then, can you complain of being damned? I have more reason to complain than you, for you have had a long time of repentance given you; but I was turned to Hell as soon as I had sinned; you had salvation offered you, and pardon and forgiveness often tendered you; but I never had any mercy offered me, but was consigned, as soon as I had sinned, to everlasting punishment. If I had had the offer of salvation, I never would have slighted it as you have done; and it had been better for you, that you had never had the offer of it neither; for then damnation had been easier to you. Who do you think should pity you, that would be damned in spite of Heaven itself?

This made the wretch cry out, O do not thus continue to torment me. I know that my destruction is of myself. O that I could forget it! The thoughts of that is here my greatest plague. I would be damned, and therefore justly am so.

Then turning to the fiend that tortured him, he said, But it was through thy temptations, cursed devil: It was thou that temptedst me to all the sins I have been guilty of; and dost thou now upbraid me? You say you never had a Saviour offered you; but you should call to mind, you never had a tempter neither, as I have had continually of thee, from whose importunate solicitations I never could be free.

To this the devil scornfully replied, I own it was my business to decoy you hither; and you have oft been told so by your preachers; they told you plain enough we sought your ruin, and went about continually like roaring lions, seeking whom we could devour; and I was oft afraid you would believe them, as several did, to our great disappointment; but you were willing to do what we would have you; and since you have done our work, it is but reasonable that we should pay your wages. And then the fiend tormented him afresh, which caused him to roar out so horridly, I could no longer stay to hear him, and so past away.

Epen. How dismal, said I, then, to my conductor, is the condition of these damned souls! They are the devil's slaves while upon earth, and he upbraids and then torments them for it when they come to Hell.

Ang. Their malice against all the race of Adam, said my conductor, is exceeding great, because the blessed Redeemer died to save them, and they enjoy that happiness from which those spirits were cast down. And though it is impossible they should prevail upon the elect, so as to make one perish,

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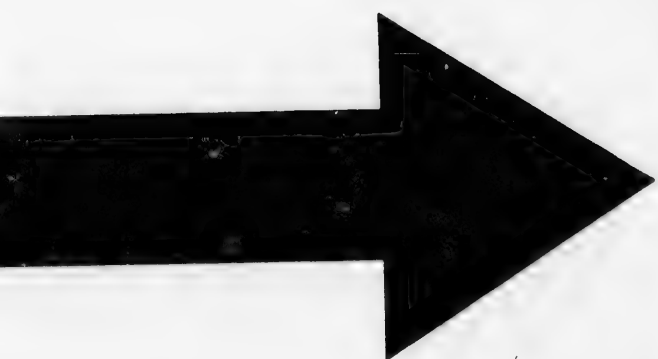
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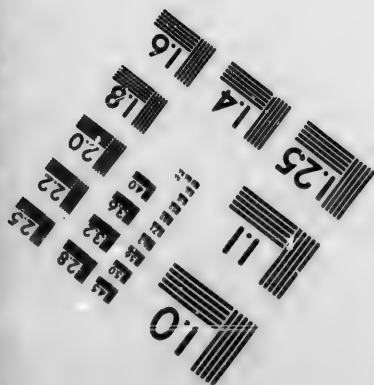
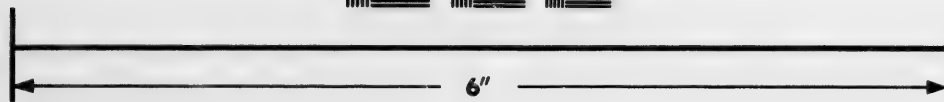
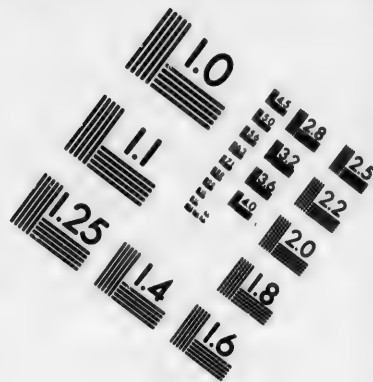
yet since they know not who they are, they cease not to tempt all to sin, by all the means they can, as knowing that is the way to make them miserable: and because many souls are ignorant of their devices, they easily prevail upon them to their eternal ruin. And how they treat them here, for listening to their temptations, you have seen already, and will see more of it quickly. And though they do it to satisfy the rage they have against them, as they are men, yet are they therein the Almighty's agents, and the joint executioners of his deserved vengeance against sinners, who wilfully destroy themselves by listening to the devil. Passing a little further, we saw a multitude of damned souls together, gnashing their teeth with extreme rage and pain, whilst the tormenting fiends, with hellish fury, poured liquid fire and brimstone continually upon them; they, in the mean time, cursing God themselves, and those about them, in blaspheming after a tremendous manner. I could not forbear asking of one fiend that so tormented them, who they were that he used so cruelly? Said he—

Fiend. They are those that very well deserve it: these are those cursed wretches that would teach others the right road to Heaven, whilst yet themselves were so in love with Hell, that they came hither. These are those souls that have been the great factors of Hell upon earth, and therefore do deserve a particular regard in Hell. We use our utmost diligence to give every one their share of torments, but will be sure to take care these shall not want; for these have not only their own sins to answer for, but all those too, whom they have led astray, both by their doctrine and example.

Epen. Since they have been such great factors for Hell, as you say, methinks gratitude should oblige you to use them a little more kindly.







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Fiend. To this the fiend answered me, in a scoffing manner, they that expect gratitude among devils, will find themselves mistaken: gratitude is a virtue, but we hate all virtue, and profess an immortal enmity against it; besides, we hate all learning, and were it in our power, not one of them should be happy. It is true we do not tell them so upon earth, because there it is our business to flatter and delude them; but when we have them here, where they are fast enough, (for from Hell there is no redemption,) we soon convince them of their folly in believing us.

Epen. From the discourse I had heard of this and other of the devils, I could not but reflect, that it is infinite and unspeakable grace, by which any poor sinners are brought to Heaven; considering how many snares and baits are laid by the enemy of souls to entrap them by the way. And therefore it is a work well worthy of the blessed Son of God, to save his people from their sins, and to deliver them from the wrath to come. But it is an unaccountable madness and folly in men to refuse the offers of his grace, and to close in with the destroyer.

Ang. It is sin that thus hardens their hearts, and blinds their eyes, so that they are incapable of making a right judgement of things, until the holy spirit comes and anoints their eyes with his eye salve, which makes the scales of ignorance and error to drop off, whereby they come to see things in a truer light.

Epen. Going further on, I heard a wretch complaining, in a heart-breaking strain, against those men that had betrayed him hither.

Soul. I was told, (said he,) by those that I depended on, and thought could have informed me right, that if I said but Lord have mercy on me, when I came to die, it would be enough to save me;

but O how wretchedly I find myself mistaken, to my eternal sorrow! Alas! I called for mercy on my death bed, but found it was too late. This cursed devil here, that told me just before, that I was safe enough, then told me it was too late, and Hell must be my portion, as I find it is.

Devil. You see I told you true at last, and then you would not believe me. A very pretty business! is it not, think you? You spend your days in the pursuit of sin, and wallow in your filthiness; and you would go to Heaven when you die! Would any but a mad man think that would ever do? No, he that in good earnest does intend to go to Heaven when he dies, must walk in the ways of holiness and virtue while he lives. You say some of your lewd companions told you, that saying, Lord have mercy on you, when you came to die, would be enough: a very fine excuse! You might have known, if you would have given yourself but leisure to have read the bible, that without holiness, there is none shall see the Lord! Therefore, this is the sum of the matter: you were willing to live in your sins as long as you could; you did not leave them at last because you did not like them, but because you could follow them no longer; and this you know to be true. And could you have the impudence to think to go to Heaven with the love of sin in your heart? No, no; no such matter: you have been warned often enough, that you should take heed of being deceived, for God would not be mocked; but such as you sowed, you should also reap; so that you have no reason to complain of any thing but your own folly, which you now see too late.

Epen. This lecture of the devil was a very cutting one to the poor tormented wretch, (said I to my conductor,) and contains the true case of many now on earth, as well as those in Hell. But O what a far

different judgement do they make in this sad state, from what they did on earth!

Ang. The reason of that, is, replied my guardian angel, because they will not allow themselves to think what the effect of sin will be, nor what an evil it is, whilst upon earth. It is inconsideration is the ruin of so many thousands, who think not what they are doing, nor whither they are going, till it is too late to help it.

We had not gone much further, before we heard another tormenting of himself, and aggravating his own misery, by reflecting on the happiness of blessed souls.

Soul. How brightly, said he, do the saints in Heaven shine in the glory of the Divine image, whilst I am deformed! And yet I was once as capable of that glory as they, had the same nature with them, the same reason, the intellectual faculties and powers; but, O what a prodigious monster am I now become! That I should hate, and hate eternally, the eternal Excellency—now sin and death are finished upon me: and O how vast is the difference between us! They have the human nature in its most exalted beauty and perfection; but I, accursed I, have the same nature in its utmost turpitude and depravation; which renders the comparison unspeakably far more unequal, than that would be of the most amiable lovely person, flourishing in all the gayety and prime of youthful strength and beauty, with a putrid and rotten carcass, deformed by the corruption of a loathsome grave. Ah! whence is this amazing difference, but through my wilful and accursed sin? It is sin, it is only sin that has undone me, and brought me here to suffer, as the just reward thereof, the dreadful vengeance of eternal fire.

Epen. We were diverted from giving any further ear unto these stinging self-reflections of this poor

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lost creature, by seeing a vast number of tormenting fiends lashing incessantly a numerous company of wretched souls, with knotted whips of ever-burning steel; whilst they roared out with cries so very piercing, and so lamentable, I thought it might have melted even cruelty itself into some pity; which made me say to one of the tormentors, O stay your hand, and do not use such cruelty as this to them who are your fellow creatures, and whom you have yourselves betrayed to all this misery.

Devil. No, (answered the tormentor very smoothly,) though we are bad enough, no devil was ever as bad as they, nor guilty of such crimes as they have been: for we all know there is a God, although we hate him; but these are such as never could be brought to own (till they came hither,) that there was such a being.

Epen. Then these, said I, are Atheists, a wretched sort of men indeed; and who had once like to have ruined me, had not eternal grace prevented it. I had no sooner spoke, but one of the tormented wretches cries out, with a sad mournful accent—

Soul. Sure, I should know that voice: it must be Epenetus.

I was amazed to hear my name mentioned by the infernal crew; and therefore, being desirous to know who it was, I answered, Yes, I am Epenetus; but who are you, in that sad lost condition, that knows me?

Soul. To this the lost unknown replied, I was once well acquainted with you upon earth, and had almost persuaded you to be of my opinion. I am the author of that celebrated book, so well known by the title of Leviathan.

Epen. What! the great Hobbs? (said I,) are you come hither? Your voice is so much changed, I did not know it.

Hobbs. Alas! replied he, I am that unhappy man indeed, but am so far from being great, that I am one of the most wretched persons in all these sooty territories. Nor is it any wonder that my voice is changed; for I am now changed in my principles, though changed too late to do me any good: for now I know there is a God; but O, I wish there was not! for I am sure he will have no mercy on me, nor is there any reason that he should. I do confess, I was his foe on earth, and now he is mine in Hell, where he makes me suffer all that Almighty power can inflict, or that a creature is able to sustain. I feel—I feel, to my eternal woe, that I am now the subject of that power I once so wickedly derided; and it is that wretched confidence I had in my own wisdom, that has thus betrayed me.

Epen. Your case indeed is miserable, and yet you needs must own you suffer justly: for how industrious were you to make proselytes of others, and so involve them in the same damnation. None has more reason to know this than I; who had almost been taken in the snare, and perished irrecoverably.

Hobbs. It is that, says he, that stings me to the heart, to think how many perish by my means; I was afraid, when first I heard your voice, that you had likewise been consigned to punishment. Not that I can wish any person happy, for it is my plague that any are so whilst I am miserable; but because every soul that is brought hither, through my seduction whilst I was on earth, doubles my pains in Hell.

Epen. But tell me, for I fain would be informed, and you can do it: did you indeed believe, when upon earth, there was no God? Could you imagine that the world could make itself, and that the creatures were the causes of their own production? Had you no secret whispers in your soul, that told you it was another made you, and not you yourself?

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And had you never any doubts about this matter? I have often heard it said, when upon earth, though there are many that profess there is no God, there is not one that thinks so; and it would be strange there should, because there is none but carry in their bosom a witness for that God whom they deny. Now you can tell whether it is so or no; and you have now no reason to conceal your sentiments.

Hobbs. Nor will I, Epenetus, answered he, although the thoughts thereof sting me afresh. I did at first believe there was a God, who was that sovereign self-subsisting power that gave a being to all other creatures; but falling afterwards to vicious courses, which rendered me obnoxious to his wrath, I had some secret wishes there was none; for it is impossible to think there is a God, and not withal to think him just and righteous, and consequently that he is obliged to punish the transgressors of his law. And, as I was conscious to myself, I lay obnoxious to his justice, it made me hate him, and wish that there was no such being; but still pursuing the same vicious courses, and finding justice did not overtake me, I then began to hope there was no God; and, from those hopes began to frame in my own breast ideas suitable to what I hoped; and having thus, in my own thoughts, framed a new system of the world's original, excluding thence the being of a Deity, I found myself so fond of these new notions, that I at last prevailed upon myself to give them credit, and then endeavoured to fasten the belief of them on others. But before I came to such a height as this, I do acknowledge that I found several checks in my own conscience for what I did, and all along should now and then be troubled with some strange uneasy thoughts, as if I should not find all right at last, which I endeavoured to put off as much as in me lay. And now I find those checking thoughts,

that might have been of service to me then, are here the things that most of all torment me. And I must own, the love of sin hardened my heart against my Maker, and made me hate him first, and then deny his being. Sin, that I hugged so close within my bosom, has been the cursed cause of all this woe, the serpent that has stung my soul to death; for now I find, maugre my vain philosophy, and those new systems I endeavoured to obtrude upon the world, There is a God, and that a great and terrible one. I find too, now, that God will not be mocked, although it was my daily practice in the world to mock at Heaven, and ridicule whatever things are sacred, which were the means I used to spread abroad my cursed notions, and which I always found very successful. For those I could but get to ridicule the sacred oracles, I always looked upon to be in a fair way to become my disciples. But now the thoughts thereof are more tormenting to me than all the torments I sustain by whips of burning steel. For nothing more provokes the offended Majesty of Heaven, than thus to ridicule what he has made so awful.

Epen. By that which you have said, it is easy to discern the great malignity of sin against the ever blessed God, from whose most righteous will and law it is a deviation. And it was alone your giving way to sin, that entailed all your miseries upon you; and, doubtless, it is a cruel and tormenting thought to think, that what you suffer is most justly. But it is not my design to aggravate your miseries, only I would ask another question, that I would be resolved: I heard yourself, and others in the same condition with you, cry out of burning steel, and fire, and flames, and yet I cannot discern it. Where there is fire, there must be some degree of light; and yet, for aught appears to me, you are still in utter darkness.

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Hobbs. O that I could but say I felt no fire! How easy would my torments be, to that which now I find them! But, out alas! the fire that we endure, ten thousand times exceeds all culinary fire in fierceness, and is of a quite different nature from it; which you already well observed in one particular, which is, there is no light at all attends it, as does upon such fire as burns upon earth; but, notwithstanding all the fire in Hell, we are in utter darkness. But then, the fire you burn on earth, is of a preying and devouring nature; for whatsoever it takes hold of, it consumes to ashes; and when it meets with no more fuel, it goes out. But here it is not so, for though it burns with that tremendous fierceness, which none but those that feel it know, yet does it not consume, nor ever will; we shall ever be burning, yet not burned; it is a tormenting but not a consuming fire. The fire that is burned on earth, is a corporeal fire, and cannot seize on immaterial substance; and such are souls. But here the fire seizes upon our souls, and puts them into pain so exquisite, and so tormenting, as cannot be expressed. It was my ignorance of this, when upon earth, that made me ridicule the notion of immaterial substances being burned by fire, which here, to my own cost, I find too true. And then another difference, betwixt the fire that burns us here, and that which burns on earth, is this, that you can kindle that whenever you please, and quench it when you will; but here it is otherwise: this fire is kindled by the breath of Heaven, like to a stream of brimstone, and it burns for ever, and therefore is most properly styled, Fire unquenchable; which is here like to be our everlasting portion. And this is what I have to answer upon the last sad question that you asked me.

Epen. Sad indeed! said I. See what Almighty power can inflict on those that violate his righteous

law! I was making some further observations on what I heard, when the relentless fiend, that was before tormenting of them, thus interrupted me:

Devil. You see, by him, what sort of men they were when in the world; and do not you think that they deserve the punishment they undergo?

Epen. To which I answered, Doubtless it is the just reward of sin which now they suffer, and which hereafter you shall suffer too; for you, as well as they, have sinned against the ever blessed God; and for your sin shall suffer the just vengeance of eternal fire. Nor is it in the least any excuse to say, you never doubted the being of a God; for though you knew there was a God, yet you rebelled against him, and therefore shall be justly punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

Devil. To this the fiend replied, It is true, we know we shall be punished, as thou hast said; but if it be a reason why mankind should have pity showed them, because they fell through the temptations of the devil, it is the same case with me, and all the rest of the inferiour spirits; for we were tempted by the bright sun of the morning, to take part with him, and therefore, though this aggravates the crime of Lucifer, it should extenuate that of inferiour spirits.

Ang. To this my bright conductor (who had not spoken to them since my coming hither,) thus replied with a stern angry countenance: O thou apostate, wicked, lying spirit! Canst thou affirm those things, and see me here? Dost thou not know it was thy proud heart that made thee take part with Lucifer, against the blessed God, who had created thee a glorious creature? But priding of thyself in thy own beauty, thou wouldst have been above the blessed Creator, and so wert ready to take part with Lucifer, and justly art with him cast down to Hell, and

thy former comeliness and beauty changed to that horrid monstrous form in which thou now appearest, as the just punishment of thy rebellious pride.

Devil. To this the apostate spirit only said, Why dost thou thus invade our territories, and come here to torment us before our time? And when he had said this, he slunk away, as if he durst not stay to have an answer.

Epen. The fiend being gone, I said to my conductor, something I have already heard about the fall of the apostate angels, but have a great desire to be informed in the particulars thereof more fully.

Ang. To this my guardian angel answered me, When thou shalt once have put off thy mortality, and be translated to the blessed above, there thou shalt know such things as now thou canst not apprehend. And therefore in thy present state, desire not to be wise above what is written. It is enough to know that angels sinned, and for their sins were cast down to Hell. But how pure spirits should have a thought rise in their hearts, against the eternal purity that first created them, is what thou art not capable of comprehending now. The angelick spirits are free agents all, created so by the Almighty, who loves to have a free and willing service offered him by all his creatures: and this, the sacred oracles inform you, is called a reasonable service. And angels had a time for their probation, even in Heaven, as well as Adam had in Paradise, and like him was created in a possibility of falling; but as the fall of Adam was repaired by the promise of the great Messiah, so all those blessed spirits, that kept their station in the great defection of the apostate angels, are, through the wondrous grace of the Messiah, confirmed therein for ever: that he might be the head of angels, too, as well as men, and have in all things the pre-eminence, as well becomes the eternal Son of God.

But you have seen enough in these black realms of misery and woe, to show the glory of eternal justice, which even the damned spirits own to be so. For when that great deciding day shall come, in which the bodies of the dead shall rise, and be united to their souls again, and then appear before the judgment seat, there is none of these black souls but will plead guilty, and justify the judgment of damnation, that they shall then hear God pronounce against them.

Epen. I have observed, said I, that all of them complain most of the torment that arises from their own sense of guilt, which justifies the justice of their punishment. This gloomy prison is the best glass to behold sin in its most proper colours; for were there not the greatest malignity in sin, it would not be rewarded with so extreme a punishment.

Ang. Your inference is very natural; but there is yet a better glass than this, to see the just demerits due to sin; and that is by contemplation to behold the blessed Son of God upon the cross—there we may see the dire effects of sin; there we may see its true malignity. For all the sufferings of the damned here, are but the sufferings of creatures still; but on the cross you see a suffering God.

Epen. Surely, said I, justice and mercy did never so triumph and kiss each other as in that fatal hour. For justice here was fully satisfied in the just punishment of sin; and mercy triumphed and was pleased, because hereby salvation for poor sinners was effected. And, O eternal praises to his holy name for ever, that by his grace has made me willing to accept of this salvation, and thereby to become an heir of glory. For I remember some of those lost wretches here, have in their bitter lamentations urged, That when salvation has been offered them, they refused it. It was therefore grace alone that helped me to ac-

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cept it. My shining guardian told me, hereupon, that he must now conduct me to the earth again, and leave me there to wait with faith and patience, till my expected happy change should come. And added, likewise, that it would be my wisdom to retain always such a due sense of my own unworthiness; for, to be vile in my own eyes, would make me precious in the sight of God: and that I should not take that caution ill, because the enemy of souls is readiest with temptations to puff up those who have had great discoveries and revelations of the mind of God, for there is nothing that the devil aims at more, than to destroy those who are most dear to God: and though he ever fails in his attempts, he is unwearied still in his endeavours; and oftentimes prevails so far against them, as to persuade them to commit those sins, which make them afterwards go mourning to their graves. I gave him thanks for the good counsel he had given me, and told him I should be much wanting to myself, if I did not accept it as the greatest kindness he could show me. Come then, said he, and let us leave these realms of woe and horror to the possession of their black inhabitants.

And in a very little space of time I found myself on earth again, and in that very place where I designed to have committed that black sin of being my own murderer, overcome by the temptations of the devil, who had persuaded me there was no God, as is in the beginning of this book related. But what way it was that I came thither, I am not at all able to determine. As soon as I was by the bank that I before had sat on, the bright appearance, by whom I had all along been conducted, said to me: Now, Epenetus, you know where you are, and I must stay no longer with you now. I have another ministration to attend. Praise him that sits upon the throne for ever, who has all power in Heaven, earth, and Hell—

For all the wonders of his love and grace,
That he has shown you in so short a space.

As I was going to reply to him, my bright conductor disappeared, and I was left alone. And having for some time considered of the amazing Visions I had seen, and of the wondrous things that I had heard, I scarce believed I was again on earth, nor did I know what time it was I had been absent. And then resolving to return to my own habitation, I first knelt, and prayed that I might never lose a lively sense of a those wondrous things that had been shown me; and then rose up again, blessing and praising God for all his goodness, and much admiring at his wondrous grace and condescension. Being returned unto my house, my family were much surprised to see my countenance so strangely changed, and looked upon me as if they scarce had known me. I asked them what the meaning was, of their unusual admiration? They answered, It was the alteration in my visage that had caused it. In what respect, said I, is it that I am altered so? They told me, Yesterday my looks were so extremely clouded and cast down, I seemed the very image of despair: but now my face appeared abundantly more beautiful, and carried all the marks of perfect joy and satisfaction in it. If you had seen, said I, what I have seen to-day, you would not wonder at the change you see. Then going into my closet, I took my pen and ink, and there wrote down what I had heard and seen, declaring the whole Visions from the first to the last: all which I hope may have the same effect on those that read them, as they had on me in writing them.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be glory for ever. Amen. To whose blessing I recommend it.